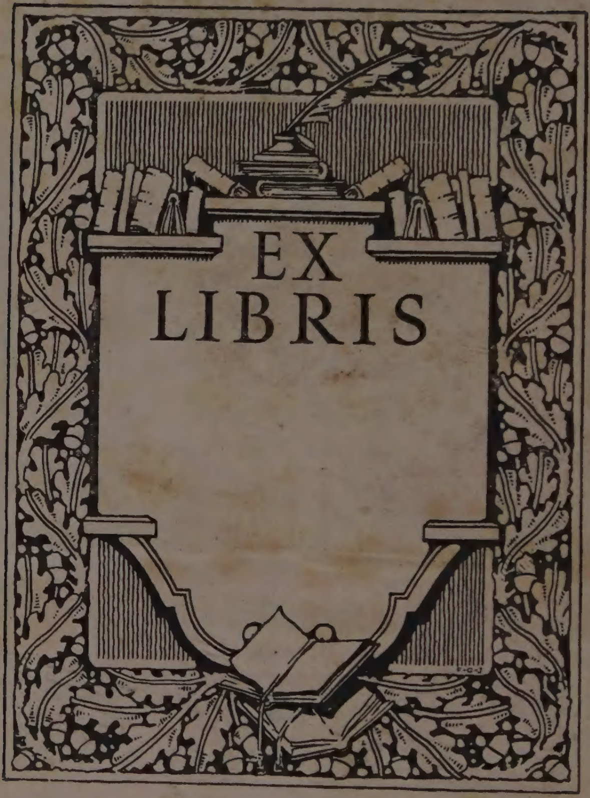
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HIGHWAY INTO SPAIN

HIGHWAY INTO SPAIN

by

MARCEL AUROUSSEAU

> *But the mind's eye cannot carry*
> *the various aspects of the road and*
> *the multiple incidents of the road.*
>
> GEORGE MOORE

LONDON
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A PROLOGUE

Which none but the conscientious reader will profitably skip.

Dear Max,

It is not a feat, to have walked all the way to Spain. Many others have made long journeys on foot, and we number among our predecessors a few illustrious men, like Oliver Goldsmith and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who have talked about what they did. Thousands have done more difficult things but have not talked about them. We met, you will remember, a middle-aged gentleman in London, who cycled across Asia from Constantinople to Pekin, with only one companion, when he was a young man. I heard, recently, of a Polish family that set out from Liège to make the pilgrimage to Assisi on foot, wheeling the baby in a perambulator. It is not recorded that they ever got there, but, in this age of transport, when even the Holy Carpet has forsaken the caravan for the swifter hospitality of a British cruiser, it is the start that is the brave thing. Those who set out upon a long journey, forswearing the help of beasts of burden, and of the vehicles that our century commands, are strong enough in spirit to reach their journey's end. Why doubt that the Poles reached Assisi? They must have got there, and they prove that, even to-day, it is not a feat for two men to walk a thousand miles and to take fifty-two days over it, instead of going sensibly by train, which takes only twenty-four hours.

But, if it be not a feat, it is an adventure to walk to Spain, for on the way one sees many things. Along the road from Paris to Madrid we saw many things. You saw through your own eyes and felt through your own senses. I looked at the same things and encountered similar experiences, but I do not know, really, what you saw and felt, nor can you know what it was to me. It seems natural, therefore, to write it all down. Then, should you do so too, we may claim what we have believed from the beginning—that we have shared, completely and fairly, an experience that was incomparably fine, and have made it ours.

When we set out on this adventure we had only one purpose, that of enjoyment. We walked to Madrid because we wanted to walk to Madrid, and for no other reason. Never once on the way did either of us think of writing about the journey, and we made no notes. Afterwards, when it was all over, and we understood what a possession we shared in the memory of this journey, we made notes. How excitedly we made them, in that week before you sailed for New York! They showed us how brimful time had been during the best days we had ever spent together. They placed a value upon every moment. We discussed, vaguely, a plan for collaboration. We would, somehow, write a fuller account of this journey, so that none of it might be lost to us. Let us hope that nothing but the vague plan for collaboration has been lost!

It seems better, more natural, for each to write his own account. And so I find myself writing a book for you, a book that is really a long letter, the longest that you will ever receive. It is written for you, but let me confess at once that it has been impossible to exclude the feeling that I am addressing a wider audience. That will betray itself in spite of me. Yet, my account must be most personal, as intimate as I can make it, if you are to understand the full meaning that the best adventure we have shared has for me.

Do you understand what seemed to be the very first step in this undertaking? Why did you walk to Spain with me? No doubt you have a satisfactory answer, when you ask yourself that question, if you do ask it. But it cannot be the whole answer. You remember how simply, spontaneously, unexpectedly, the thing began. Winter was over in Paris, and we were sitting at opposite sides of the table, writing, in the sunny room of the cottage in the courtyard. Life in Paris had become almost routine, pleasant, satisfying, but monotonous. That is why you did it! We had committed the sin of settling down! You pushed your papers impatiently aside, looked across at me, and said, "A., let us *do* something." Instantly I responded, "Let us walk to Madrid." Before that moment there had been no talk of anything so different from what we had been doing, but from that moment our purpose for the next three months was clear. We were going to walk to Madrid.

But why did I respond at once with so unexpected a proposal?

The answer is a long one. It is an attempt to trace the cause of an action. We understood each other in few words. But, did we then understand each one himself? I, why had I answered so instantly, so definitely? We had talked before, in a vague way, of not staying in Paris "all the time." How long "all the time" might be, with our slender resources, neither of us knew, and I believe that we would have worried ourselves little about that, so long as the resources held. Spain and Madrid had never been mentioned. We had often talked of Rome, Florence, Vienna, New York, New Orleans, but never of Madrid. Why did I look up from the concentration of writing, and say, as if by instinct, "Let us walk to Madrid?"

It was as if all the dreams, memories, desires, of a life time had suddenly gathered together, and you released them in a bright bubble of inspiration that rose from the dark, up and up through me, into a place where there is light, where I could see them, all different colours, yet all the same, and all saying "Spain!"

And yet—without you I might never have gone to Spain on foot, over the simple road. I might have gone by boat or by rail some day, but that would have been travel, not adventure, and I have had enough of travel. There must be sound reasons to explain why I went to Spain, and with you. I had never troubled to think about them before I began to write this account, but it was necessary to think deeply about them as soon as I knew that I was going to write it.

The reasons extend away back into my boyhood. I was never at any time a real boy, never a scrubby, rough, exploring, fighting little animal of the kind that is always in scrapes, always off on the most pressing concerns with other rascals who use bad language. I held myself distant from that kind of boy, with a scorn that contained more of envy and respect than of disdain. I liked safety and peace, which are not to be found among boys of action. But I watched the dust-clouds of sham battle from afar. And I reaped the reward of dreams—which is, perhaps, the reward of defeat. Hidden by the neat clothes and unnatural fastidiousness of a well-behaved infant, there was, really, a romantic adventurer. And my adventures may well have been more exciting than those of other, objectionable little boys, who really did things. And they had another advantage—being all imagined, and never confessed, they were safe in every way.

Through my ancestry and environment I was privy to the life of ships and the sea. Family history records a great-grandfather who commanded an East-Indiaman. I knew him very well. And wasn't I a native of a great port, the finest harbour in the world? It is an adventure in itself to have been born in Australia, especially in Sydney. Ask anyone from Sydney about *that*! Ships were my fascination, and I collected the cigarette-cards of those days, on which the ships of all past ages were shown. And the noblest vessels of the whole gallery were ships of Spain, built three hundred years ago. They gave to Spain its first, romantic colour.

When the Spanish-American War broke out, the colour was deepened, and Spain became real, for the war sent its regular messengers to Sydney in the form of two American supply-ships from the Philippines. Whenever I went to the Botanical Gardens with my father, there was one of them lying in Farm Cove, and whenever I look across Farm Cove now I see fleets of ships that are no longer there, and the most vivid of them all are the white, American supply-ships. What irony, to choose an American as my companion for this journey! However, as you were born after the Spanish-American War, you might be acquitted as innocent of it.

Early school-days added their share of influence to the formation of a Spanish romance. Around the coasts of Australia there are many strange names proudly preserved, Dutch, French, and a few Spanish. Only van Dieman's Land have we sorrowfully changed. The Spanish voyages across the Pacific, from Panama and Peru, are described in our history lessons, and we are all familiar with the exploits of Torres and de Quiros, though somewhat ignorant about Magellan. Actually, these voyages have little to do with Australia, because the real traces of Spain in the Pacific are to be found no closer to us than the New Hebrides, the Solomon Islands, and the far away Philippines. Torres Strait, in spite of its name, is a poor justification for claiming the explorations of the Spanish sailors as a part of our history, because the Spaniards, who penetrated so naturally into the tropics and the hot, arid lands, passed Australia by, as I was to pass by Spain long before we went there. Sometimes I regret that the Spaniards missed Australia. It is a country where they would have felt at home. And to it they would have given some beautiful things of a kind that it will never now possess.

But school and books offered more than this myth of a Spanish period of exploration. Sir Walter Raleigh, the buccaneers, and the Spanish Main caught my fancy. I learnt of the Great Armada, the inquisition, and the draining of the fabulous Indies of their wealth.

I learnt a little of the long campaigns against the Moors, and became familiar with pictures of the Alhambra. Spain and her doings were, for me, the symbol of all hazardous excitement and perilous adventure. The Greeks, the Carthaginians, the Tartars, were easily displaced by the courtly, crafty, gallant, godly adventurers of Spain. Later and more mature reading brought me to Don Quixote and Prescott, the latter winning me to the colonial realm for a time. When my father used to ask me what I intended to do when I grew up, my answer, for years, was "I'm going to South America." "What! To marry a Patagonian?" he would ask, and it was the risk of meeting that Patagonian that brought me, I think, back to Spain.

I have never been to South America, and have not been captured by anything resembling a Patagonian. The Colonial Empire remained interesting only as a grand product of Spanish genius. Even Sir Walter Raleigh, for all his ruff and his foolish fine manners and American tobacco, vanished, in my contemplation of the splendid failures of Spain. I became interested in the Spanish language. I was sure that it was a beautiful language, though I had never heard a word of it spoken, and, when in high-school, I tried very hard and secretly to get a Spanish grammar. I don't know how I would have paid for it, and was rather alarmed when my father revealed a knowledge of the attempt. It seemed to amuse him, but the report he made was discouraging. A Spanish grammar was unobtainable in the Sydney of 1905. Somewhat resentfully I joined the German class. German for Spanish! A tin-opener instead of a rich web of dreams! But it proved to be a useful tin-opener, and it kept alive an interest in languages.

Spain, the Spaniards, and Spanish, seem to have been shut behind a door marked "German," for, as keys to visions, they belong definitely to my boyhood, not to my youth. But I did bear from them into my later life a need, a hunger, to do some beautiful, uncommon thing for myself; to live, for a while, in a world enraptured —not merely to dream, but to be part of what might be dream. To go, without asking leave, ungainsaid, free, answering nothing but my own desire and my own need.

My romantic ardour must have subsided into a temporary burial of long duration. Other things began to absorb my interest, and not even the report of one of my professors, who attended an international congress in Mexico City, aroused more than a passing enthusiasm. He was a professor who infected people with his own enthusiasm, and his report of Mexico City was like a tale of el Dorado. How deeply I must have buried Spain is shown by my loss of opportunity when I went to Western Australia to earn my living. I learnt there that Spanish institutions exist in Australia itself; there is a monastery at New Norcia, where the monks grow their own wine; and there are mission stations among the wildest aborigines of the remote north-west. My official position would have made it easy for me to visit New Norcia, where the monks entertain visiting examiners in a most hospitable way, but when the chance came I declined it in favour of a colleague! Western Australia, indeed, might have brought me into close relations with Spanish people. But it did not. I undertook there a course of reading on Mexican affairs, and came to know the memoirs of Madame Calderon de la Barca, but they made no more impression upon me than other books about other foreign lands. Even when I went to the War with a Western Australian battalion, men with such names as Roderigo, Jago, Pontago, Pianto, Riva, and Francisco, such utter strangers among the familiar Smiths and Johnstons, were, to me, no more than Australian soldiers who, like myself, bore foreign names. Not once did I ask any of those men to explain their Spanish origin. Not even the War itself revived my interest in Spain. Spain was neutral, and we considered, in those days, that he who was not with us was against us.

The War, however, did a most important thing. It revived my need to undertake a personal adventure. Nay, more. It proved that in order to do so, I must carefully select a person with whom to share it. The War itself was not the adventure I wanted, but it taught me that a superb experience cannot be felt alone. That any but purely contemplative joy is not full, unless it be shared with another person. During the months of training in camps, the War seemed to have treated me with a special generosity. It produced the very person for whom I was looking. A person of about my own age, who had been one of my students in Perth, and who went into camp with me. A person who was closely "in tune," and with whom I seldom got out of tune. I should, of course, have known that this was all too miraculous to be true, but I have little emotional discretion, and am too ready to believe in flimsy circumstances.

Never doubting our survival, we had the whole thing planned out as something that we would do without fail, as soon as the War was over. We proposed to get demobilised in England, and to buy a small car there, and drive the whole way to Australia, excepting the short sea-passages between Singapore and Batavia, and Java and Port Darwin. The journey was to determine its own duration, and the route was to be through Central Europe to Constantinople, thence through Persia and India to Burma and the Malay States. At Port Darwin we would decide whether to go to Perth or Sydney, each place being home to one of us and therefore to the other. But the gifts of war are conditional. They require that the receiver believe only in the present moment. The unique person who might have shared that adventure was wounded the first time the battalion went to the trenches in France, and was invalided to Australia, where he died.

Long after the Armistice I embarked on a troopship to go home. On the third evening at sea, a tiny, grey knob appeared on the eastern horizon, a thing almost indistinguishable, yet real, and in seeing it, my eyes touched Spain for the first time. It was Cape Finisterre. It blurred quickly into the evening and was lost. I thought that I was never to see it again.

The morning of the tenth day brought us beside the Grand Canary, one possession that Spain has kept. To the west, in the light before dawn, it rose, a towering hump, a mass greater than any I had ever seen in entirety before, and gashed in the flank by a deep ravine. Dark and ponderous, the summit was in the sky, and the island seemed not to emerge from the sea, but to preside heavily over something that was terrible, a lid of Hell, impressive as Rodin's gates. It seemed right that the Grand Canary should belong to Spain. It fell astern, dragging, I thought, the last of an old dream under the horizon with it.

In place of the old dream there was a formless need, that necessity for a personal adventure, and that other necessity of finding a person who might share it. I found, in Australia, more than one suitable person, but suitability and freedom to act would have to coincide with my own freedom to act, and "we" would have to know what we wanted to do. It seemed almost impossible, and the old dream became a mere hope that something would happen. One man had a wife who would neither come with us nor stay at home, and wives are the ends, rather than the accompaniments, of knight-errantry. Another suggested "pottering round the islands" in a schooner, which would doubtless be delightful, but was not just what I wanted. Others had jobs, and could not risk leaving them for the sake of a whim. There was more than one girl who would have made an admirable companion had she been able to come, for there is a kind of girl who can be the most satisfying company on a crazy venture.

After about a year back in Australia there came to me, quite unexpectedly, the chance of going to America. I went, eagerly. And, just as unexpectedly, America brought the old dream to life again! It made no sudden reappearance, but suffered, rather, a steady revival during my four years in the United States. The first thing to quicken it was, I think, the discovery that Spanish is the chief accessory language of your people. While we teach French in our schools, you teach Spanish.

A summer holiday in California proved to be a most evocative experience. Not only did I find myself in a new, Hispanic world when the train got past las Vegas, a tiny place at the foot of the Rockies in New Mexico—I found the south-west to be really "Spanish-minded." And everywhere there was a feeling of tradition. I accepted a typically American invitation from a lady whom I had met only once, and spent three days in Los Angeles, three delightful days. She motored me everywhere, and brought me face to face with the tragedy of the Spanish Empire. She spoke Spanish, had been in Mexico City, and she lived in the enchantment, the deathless charm that hangs over the south and south-west, from Texas to California, the spirit of Spain when her empire was great. To this lady, it was natural that a dry meadow in the floor of a canyon should be called a ciénaga seca; to her the mountains were sierras and the road was still the camino real—the King's highway. The meaning of it came to me at the San Bernadino Mission, when she told me of the work of Junipero Serra, beside the vivid, terracotta statue of him in the garden. Life still breathes in the rudely beautiful old Mission, and in many another mission out there; in the names of places far away into Colorado; in the very words they use when talking of the land, the surface of the earth. The southern Californians have embraced a tradition—have been seized, rather, by the power of a past that is too strong to die. It is the power of the faith of the old Spanish fathers, the faith of the inquisition, of the conquests; the faith that destroys without mercy; that creates without effort, and creates real beauty. New York has forgotten its Dutchmen, forgotten, in spite of the Knickerbocker History, that it ever was New Amsterdam; but California has inherited the Colonial Empire and cherishes its riches.

When I got back to Washington it seemed natural to join a Spanish class. I needed something to absorb my leisure, a kind of oasis of retirement, and I turned, without thinking of what I was doing, to Spanish. But before three months were out I went to New York.

There I found myself not only among people who knew much of Hispanic America, but actually engaged upon geographical studies of Peru myself. I intruded into the residence halls of Columbia University and met Perez, the first Spaniard I had really known. Of course, the blue-eyed, American-born Perez has never been to Spain, but he entertained me with endless tales of his childhood in Panama, which was just as interesting, and to hear him talk was to feel the trade winds blow across Colón.

And at Columbia, I met you.

You were very well advertised, before you came up from Texas, but you proved to be a difficult acquaintance to cultivate, at first. I saw quickly that persistence would be worth the trouble, and really, after the first hostile encounters, we had little trouble at all. And little did we suspect that the long evenings we spent in each other's rooms were preparing us for what we eventually did. I had a feeling that you were going to be "important," but, to be truthful, I did not associate you in my mind with Spain at all, for I had no clear notion, at that time, of how vigorously my old interest in Spain had been revived. And yet, you did something yourself that helped to revive it.

You told me, one night, of New Orleans; of "Spanish moss" in the forests of Louisiana; of the vaults that are above ground; of drowsiness and rest; of dark bookshops haunted by the figures of old engravings; and of quiet patios, of great earthen jars, of balconies, and, over all, colour. It was a fascinating story of siesta, and I tried to make you write it down. When you refused, I made you repeat it all, and wrote it down myself as you spoke. It was the somnolence, the languor, the eclipse of Colonial Spain.

If I did not link you with the idea of Spain, I came soon to know that you would be an eminently suitable person to share an adventure. During that Winter and Spring, when we were both in New York, we had a rare opportunity of proving each other, and we used it. After our two days of "hiking" in the highlands of New Jersey no doubt was left in my mind. Doubt? Of what? I understood no more than this, that some day we might set about doing some delightful, mad thing together, sure of its success. The knowledge brought something nearer to me, and no sooner was I aware of it than my return to Australia became urgently necessary.

It was not without design that I planned to go back to Australia by a tramp steamer from Panama. By doing so, I could save money without wasting time, and I would see strange parts of the world. More. I had reasons for wishing to go to Texas, and you added another reason, or, to be truthful, became the main reason, by going home to Texas for the vacation at just the right time. So, I saw the coast of Florida and Key West, New Orleans, Houston, Dallas, and met your family, before leaving New Orleans again on the way to Panama.

That run to Panama was a perfect voyage. You asked me to write to you about it, so I wrote, from the middle of the unbelievably blue Caribbean, to tell you of awnings and patios and naked brown children in Habana, where they sell the best limeade in the world, unequalled even by that of Dallas itself; I wrote of Cuban beaches that lie like white arrows along the edge of the land; of an Alabama schooner that hailed the ship to ask the way into Habana and was swallowed up by a rain squall astern—of all the detached, impersonal beauty of the world in which I was suspended. And into the letter there crept a question. Would you, could you, join me, were I able to do some erratic thing in a not-too-far-distant future? Would you, for example, meet me somewhere in Europe, say in Paris, in a year's time? How either of us might manage to get to Paris in a year's time was more than I could imagine, but there was the question, written into the letter.

I caught my tramp steamer, by what I know now was nothing but unprecedented good luck. I caught her the day after I landed at Colón, by chasing her across the isthmus to Balboa by train. In a month I was back in Sydney.

Your answer was not long delayed. And you answered "Yes!" You would come. You would join me, you said, in a year's time. Let me appoint the place and the day, anywhere! The first, swift glance through that letter was quite a dramatic moment.

During the year that followed, we developed the vaguest of plans. Australia seemed to bury my Spanish dreams again, for I could think little about them. I accustomed myself to the idea of severing the past from the future, and you worked and saved money. We decided to go first to Paris. Why Paris? I don't think we knew. But when the year was nearly ended I booked a third-class passage around the Cape, took with me a good half of my savings, and set out for London.

That voyage is a story in itself, but the story has nothing to do with our going to Spain, though it nearly frustrated the whole scheme. Towards the end of it there came again, one dazzling afternoon, the Grand Canary. This time it was a shimmering mass of gold and olive green, a hazy enchantment that floated on the sea, with little wind-ships around it like bees around a honeycomb seen when a moment stands still in eternity. How different from the last time! Yet again, it seemed right that the island should belong to Spain. And I wondered, in the fascination of Spanish things, why I should prefer to call it the Grand Canary instead of las Palmas.

It was late that night before we anchored off Puerto de la Luz. Dapper little officers, like dolls in gaudy uniforms, came on board. They were very polite and very voluble. Bumboats, full of bright wares and vociferous boatmen, surrounded the ship with tumult and confusion. Brown dealers clambered over the rails, dragging baskets with them, and dragged more baskets up from their boats. Fruit and embroidery, beads and cigars, trinkets, and silk and sweets. Everything tawdry, everything bright, everything calling a loud attention. There were press and hurry and impasse on the decks, and much bargaining, and the happy, good humour of honest cheating. Sham, deceit, colour, confusion, vivacity: were these the spirit of Spain? Was it in the little toy swords of the little toy officers too? It seemed so.

A few days later I was again leaning over the rail watching Cape Finisterre. This time it was much closer. Through the half-gale, in the misty rain, it looked bare and cold, like a person in rags, shuddering, and trying to cover his naked shoulders. Ships were coming out from Vigo on one side; ships were coming out from Corunna on the other. It was very real indeed. Spain! There was a person beside me who seemed interested too. I had seen him before. Indeed, we were the only people on the ship who had a strong enough sense of beautiful things to stand for two hours watching Table Mountain, magnificently draped in clouds, dwindle astern as we left Capetown. Gossip said that this man was an American engine-driver. We turned from our silent contemplation of the mountain at exactly the same moment, and exchanged not only a few words, but a scrutiny of understanding. He might have been an engine-driver but whatever his occupation he plied it only in order to indulge a strange and commendable hobby, that of visiting the world's greatest waterfalls. He was returning from a trip to the Zambesi, with many photographs of the Falls, and was feeling discouraged at not being able to tint them faithfully enough. A small-built man, quietly but radiantly healthy, dark, not over-fond of shaving, and very shy. His brown eyes were ardently bright as he talked of his journeys, but so timid that they seemed to be trying to hide from me in spite of their open gaze. A poet, who perhaps drove railway engines. And opposite Cape Finisterre he made my old, old dream of Spain articulate. He looked from me to the desolate cape, and said quietly, "A haggard country, Spain. A haggard country!"

And at once I knew what I had really known for so long. I must penetrate the secret of that austere poverty. Must set foot on that land out there, and go, far from the sea, into the very heart of it!

Three days later I found you in London, in a Bayswater lodging house, and we went to Paris, to the little cottage in the courtyard, out near the Porte de Versailles. It was more than four months, from the day when we arrived in Paris, to the day on which I responded so promptly, with a ready solution, to your curious manner of suggesting that we needed a change. What a change it was to be! It was more than four months, because, although my innermost desire had been made articulate by a simple phrase uttered by a stranger, I had no true knowledge that I might express it. Not until you asked that question did I understand that, at last, I was free to go to Spain—could go now at any moment.

Do you believe me? Do you believe that this is why you really went to Spain with me? I have explained it as well as I can, but am left, I fear, exactly where the psychologists find themselves when they try to explain why a person becomes an artist, let us say. I have said no more than this: that I went to Spain because I had always wanted to go there. Surely, a good enough reason!

And you, critical person that you are, doubtless pause to consider, and say to yourself, "He might be able to advance just as good an argument to explain why he went to Astrakhan, had he gone there." No. You would be quite wrong. For no other place to which I have ever been drawn, could I bring together such a train of desires, influences, and incidents, as these that led me to Spain. There is only one similar thing that has affected my actions in a like manner, and it gives the answer to that question of some pages back, "Why Paris?"

French people of many kinds exasperate me, and in spite of my ancestry I do not like most of them. But France is the most civilised country in the western world, and French thought is the most penetrating in the world. France is the only country known to me where I find a way of living that satisfies me almost completely. It seems impossible for a stranger to get to know the French, to soften that case-hardened reserve of theirs, that so insulates the individual from the rest of the world. But the French put themselves thoroughly into their books, and they permit strangers to use their country, and to adopt their way of living, with the utmost freedom. I shall go to France whenever I can get there, just for the sake of that satisfying life. The desire to go to France was born in me, and my first experience of the country made France a kind of "standing objective." But the desire bears no resemblance to that purely personal need there was, to go to Spain.

Why to Spain with *you*? Partly because you appeared just when my Spanish dream had properly wakened up again, and were proved, by sufficient test, to be the first person I would choose to share the adventure I wanted to undertake. And you were, actually, a part of my long train of Spanish interests, because you came up from Texas, with the background of the Spanish Colonial tradition behind you; and you understood so well that New Orleans is one of the most alluring cities of the United States; understood so well the things that most appealed to me.

Have I given a satisfactory explanation of the origin of our journey, of why we went to Spain together? No. Because it is only *my* explanation. I reminded you that your explanation to yourself cannot be the whole answer. Neither can mine. We will not really understand why *we* went to Spain until your explanation is added to mine. But, there is enough to prove that we had strong reasons for undertaking this journey: to prove that my ready response, "Let us walk to Madrid," was governed by something more than momentary caprice.

And that response altered everything, from the minute when it was uttered. It was really a decision that we both embraced without hesitation or discussion, and it launched us into elaborate preparations. Two people who are going to *walk* to Spain have to separate themselves from all their worldly belongings, except the very few that they will need on the journey. And that is not an easy thing to do.

Yes. The response altered everything, in a still more important way. It made my nebulous, personal adventure imminent, like a film brought quickly to focus on the screen. It was dragged swiftly from the depths of slow, subconscious planning, to the open surface of swift, executive planning. When things become imminent, I begin to doubt them. And at once, I was in doubt of two things.

We would have to be together *all* the time, say, for two or three months on the road, each dependent solely upon the other for companionship; deprived of the relief of being able to spend long hours with other friends; deprived of the intimacy of feminine society. Would we be able to endure all that, and still maintain the necessary good temper to assure success? For, should we quarrel, the whole thing would fail.

And—had we the physique, the stamina, the health, to walk and walk and walk, across all kinds of country, in any kind of weather, day after day, continuously? Were we both, in fact, strong enough in mind and body for this adventure?

I did not express my doubts to you, but I took stock of myself, and then of you. I—what was I? A weakling, who had been nursed into something under normal health and strength only by devoted maternal care. A highly-strung, somewhat visionary person who has deliberately cultivated an interest in all that is most useless, from minerals to minarets—with subconscious habits of observation and reflection that exclude much of the practical world. Not resourceful, yet prone to ideas, and easily entertained by my own thoughts. Moody and irritable, "hard to get on with" when indisposed—which is often. Well enough among others, but, though interested in everybody I meet, bored by half the people I have to know, because one "comes to the end" of so many people so quickly. Generously myself only to a chosen few, but, among them, something of a sprite. Too mild to arouse animosity or make enemies, yet with more friends than friendships, for I do not have to seek persons of either sex; they come to me, and they remain loyal. Capable of living for months like a monk in a cell, sustained only by interest in some useless pursuit, I nevertheless rush out of the cell of my own accord, when it is least expected, and perform prodigies of enthusiasm.

I had come through three years of the infantryman's war, at the usual cost to nerves, and with a big hole in my right lung properly healed up. But pleurisy and bronchitis remind me of it whenever the barometer changes quickly, and the endurance, even of *my* recently vanished youth, is no longer mine. When my ills are not upon me I forget, forget completely, that I am ever ill, and I then set about attempting the things that normally strong and healthy people do, until my body tells me that I cannot do them all. And when I am ill, I forget that I have ever been well. But I know from experience that enthusiasm can carry me through things that are beyond my real power—can make me do things that I am unable to do; and I know that I don't easily give up anything that I want, or want to do.

Looking at myself in this way, I thought that I might live for three months in the limited and continuous company of one, quite disagreeable person, were that the only way to attain something I wanted. And I thought that, were the mountains at all inspiring, I would somehow find strength enough to cross them. I could, I thought, trust my strong enthusiasm for this plan of walking to Spain.

In this critical mood I discerned, too, that months of exercise out of doors, walking steadily into the sunshine of a warmer land; weeks of healthy, daily fatigue and sound sleep at night; weeks during which I might never open a book nor write a word myself nor ponder an intellectual problem, would certainly be good for my body and mind. An adventure such as I wanted this to be might well sweep the last, carrion vestiges of the War from my soul and give the world its old, sweet odour; and, should the weather favour us, and I myself avoid any foolish, bodily excesses, my physical tone might respond to the sunshine of Spain, and the adventure deliver me sounder than before! A high value, indeed, I was setting upon this journey to Spain!

And you? What, ultimately, did I know of you? Had my judgment, of nearly two years before, been good or bad? Were you really the most suitable person to bring into this undertaking? What had we in common? A great similarity of tastes and intellectual interests, a great love of play and spontaneity, and perhaps no more. You were much younger than me, though much older than your years. You too are a highly-strung person, and an exceptionally sensitive one, shifting rapidly, at times, from mood to dissimilar mood, in response to the faintest influences. Your senses all alive and all insatiable, yourself anticipating, nay, seeking, new experiences. Impulsive and full of surprises; reticent, reserved, to an extent that makes for more surprises, there were times when I didn't at all understand you until it was safe to seek explanations. Ardour is what drives you, and society you must have—you seek it; and find it easily. And variety you must have, and also seek. Ambition is what steadies you, and you are capable of putting aside anything that hampers it. But variety and experience and every kind of impression are the food of that ambition. You were intensely eager for the journey. Would it afford such incident, such beauty, such variety, as would lead you to want to-morrow and again to-morrow, to the very end? Would it so satisfy you as to exclude everything else you wanted, while it should last? There would be no amenities of Paris, of the settled life among men and women, along the road!

And, were you strong? You seemed not at all prone to illness, and you had, so far as I was aware, no physical disabilities, but your appearance was not robust. You could, I knew, dance and revel all night and be fit the next day, but I had not seen you under a test of prolonged endurance.

I thought, looking at you, that your eagerness would be as effective as my enthusiasm, and would carry you through. Should you discover in the journey itself material that would further your ambition, that power of setting everything else aside might also come into play. And, as for physical fitness, you were certainly in better condition than I was myself. I remembered too, that you play football whenever you can, at home. Perhaps there was nothing in these doubts, after all.

Nevertheless, groups of men who set out upon sexless enterprises know, only too well, the danger of mutinous ill-temper, and they forestall it—by strong resolutions not to disagree; by submission to a leader; and even then, a vigilant generosity has to pervade the group all the time. I once heard this matter discussed by members of an exploring expedition, who said that its possibilities are ugly. When such groups return to society, they may reveal, between some members, unbreakable bonds of the strongest affection; between others, a hatred beyond reconciliation. Much, of course, depends upon the refinement of the group. Our projected journey was, to be sure, no enforced association, and it was no whaling cruise of three years out of sight of land; no protracted expedition to uninhabited wastes of the remote world; no lost campaign among savages in the interior of a continent. We were merely going to walk through civilised, populous Europe for a couple of months—two quite ordinary people whom the natives would, most likely, consider extraordinary. But, would you and I, cut off from all other society, and with no distraction of work or serious purpose in the journey itself, be able to tolerate each other for two, perhaps for three, months? I thought a lot about these things, as we began our preparations. But I talked only of preparations.

And getting ready for the journey was not the smallest part of its enjoyment. We lost no time in getting ready. First and foremost, when should we go? That depended on one thing only, for we were of a mind to go straight away. But, "the tenant may terminate the contract upon one month's notice." The rent was due on the 22nd of the month, and the 22nd of February was close. We could leave, therefore, on the 22nd of March. We would leave on the 22nd of March promptly, very early in the morning! So, there were left to us about five weeks more in Paris. The effect on our work was bad. Five weeks of discussion, anticipation, impatience.

There was the route, on which we must decide. I suggested the shortest lines, from Paris to Andorra, and thence to Madrid, to which you agreed. Political atoms, like Monaco, San Marino, Andorra, Liechtenstein, Luxemburg, that have weathered the storms of Europe for centuries, have always interested me, and I wanted Andorra, like a child who wants an apple.

But suddenly you filled me with apprehension and jealous fear. You looked at me in that considering way that means you are going to be obstinate, and asked, like a man suggesting a more sensible alternative, "A., why not rather go to Italy?" Here, then, was Doubt No. 1. We might quarrel about it all, before it began!

I did not give you my answer aloud, my real answer, but said to myself, "Because *I* want to go to Spain!" To you I made an answer that sounded like "Er—um—m." I tried to assume the look of a person seriously weighing the advantages of Italy against those of Spain. Behind the pose I marshalled forces of resistance and persuasion, for this unexpected turn was going to be a struggle in which you must yield, and I know well enough your objections to yielding. I knew what had happened. I had thought, from the beginning, only of myself, and had identified the person chosen to share my adventure so closely with me as to forget that person, to forget that you had also lived and dreamed and desired; were different from me; not me.

The idea of Spain had captured you in the beginning. But when you began to think, as you always do, of alternatives, Italy seemed to be just as attractive, and indeed it is, to anybody who has not dreamed all his life of Spain. But you too are a dreamer. Had you been fostering Italy in your mind as I had fostered Spain? What did Italy mean to you? Whence came this alternative suggestion? Were its power over you as great as, or greater than, the power of Spain over me, perhaps *I* should yield, trusting that I would get to Spain later—probably with somebody else. Paris, Lyons, Grenoble, Briançon, Turin, Florence, Siena, Rome! It flashed past me like a train in the night, and I had to admit that it would be good. Just as good? No. Not so good. I would be willing to accept Italy only *after* I had been to Spain.

But, for you. I looked back into all I knew of you, to see if I could discover what Italy meant. Then I understood. For I saw the figure of Dr. Manfred, like that of a baleful elephant, in my mind. Dr. Manfred, who would be in Italy himself during the Summer! Dr. Manfred, who is so steeped in the lives of the Brownings that he seems to live a vicarious life in Robert Browning. Who has amassed the finest Browning collection in the world, and hidden it in your Texan university. What power the man must have! He was your strongest influence at the most impressionable time of your life. The Brownings! Italy! That is whence the suggestion came. But it would be something to struggle against, if I left you to think too long about it.

I decided rapidly that your need for Italy had been imposed upon you from outside, whereas my need for Spain had grown with me, within me, was me. So I discussed it quietly, as a mere matter of alternatives, with fear in my heart. And presently you came back to the original proposal, won, it seemed, by the argument that Italy is the beaten track, but Spain is a land to explore. That Italy would still be there when you returned from Spain. That some day you would be sure to go to Italy, and so, for the present, Italy could wait. And, fortunately, you do not change your decisions.

We turned to more practical affairs: the hunt for a big, wooden box, that was to hold the domestic implements and utensils we had acquired; the books, magazines, note-books, and manuscripts, that had mysteriously grown in bulk; the heavy coats and rugs, that can be carried in rolls, but must be stored in boxes. Then we bought things. Myself, strong boots, a sweater, two khaki shirts. Each of us bought a rucksack. You, it seemed, had nothing else to buy, and you rejected the idea of any boots but those you had been wearing in Paris. I had a soldierly scorn for those boots of yours. I felt that the road would teach you, and I hoped the lesson would not be too hard.

There were maps, to be reduced, like everything else we were to carry, to the bare minimum. A research on maps resulted in the purchase of nine, five of the *Carte Taride*, and four of the *Carte*

Michelin, on three different scales, but they were the most suitable we could get. A geographer would have repudiated all but official maps, but the true tint of geography was fading slowly out of me. I spent long hours with the maps, plotting and measuring the itinerary, marking the daily stages, and preparing tables of times, places and distances. I found that it is 1,453 kilometres or 907 miles from Paris to Madrid by the route we decided to follow, and calculated that we would walk that distance in forty-eight days, allowing for the extra day here and there at an interesting place. At first, I consulted you about the details of the route, and found, to my astonishment, that the maps conveyed to you little idea of the nature of the country. You wanted to make détours, to places like Carcassonne, or to cut straight across country where it couldn't be done. I got irritated and ceased to refer to you. But you had happy fancies, as well as troublesome suggestions. Do you remember pointing to a lake in the Pyrenees, and saying, "We will take a bath *there*!"? In general, you were content to leave this business of maps to me, as I was content to leave the art of packing boxes to you. I did one thing with the maps that will condemn me for ever, in the last judgment of geographers. I cut them. I cut them so that nothing need be carried but the strip of each sheet where our road ran across it.

The distance to Madrid astonished us. We wanted it to be a long way, and to take a long time. But 907 miles made us consider the act of walking. Were we in training for such a journey? Here, then, was Doubt No. 2, coming to both of us, and showing reason for its existence! And here, with considerable reserve on both sides, we talked of these doubts. Little was really said, and it was agreed, almost tacitly, that we must be prepared to meet those occasions when one of us would grate on the other—and be prepared, afterwards, to overlook them. Prepared, above all, to start the journey "in good nick."

We suspected that we were not in training, and thought that we should do something about it, so we did exercises before going to bed, honestly, nearly every night. We felt, in the end, that they made no difference whatever, and I find it amusing to look back on them. I have often done those exercises, for weeks, even for months, and always I decide that they make less difference than half an hour of tennis every afternoon—for the benefit of "exercise" depends on its enjoyment. It is difficult, for people situated as we were, to get regular, athletic recreation in Paris. But goodness! How we used to walk in Paris, around Paris! Exercises or no exercises, events proved that we must have been in fair training for the journey.

And you toiled at the packing! When it came to the rucksacks, you even weighed them, to ensure an equal division of the burden. One change of shirts and underclothing, two pairs of spare socks, handkerchiefs, a note-book, and a book, went into each rucksack. Mine was to take the maps and the flask of Monnet brandy (Pauline's inspired contribution to the expedition); and yours a camera, the communal shaving kit, soap, and emergency kit. No—there was not a compass in the outfit! You adjusted those packs until each turned the scales at exactly five kilos—ten pounds. To make it right, you even separated the two volumes of the tiny red Spanish dictionary, putting one in each pack! We decided not to wear coats, but to take overcoats, which we could wear, or carry in our packs, according to the weather.

It seemed not unlikely that we would look very shabby by the time we reached Madrid. It would be impossible for two "gentlemen" to appear in such a city looking like tramps. We thought, therefore, that we should send suits and accessory clothing to Madrid in advance by parcel post. You packed them very neatly, and we took the parcel to the ceinture railway station at Point du Jour.

But French regulations should always be studied beforehand. *That* parcel could not go to Madrid. It must be wrapped in *new* brown paper, tied with *one* piece of *new* twine, and the free ends of the twine, at least four inches long, must be sealed together to the paper. And would we please bring our own sealing wax? We did all that, and presented the parcel again.

It was inspected, declared properly packed, and was duly weighed. Luckily the clerk was an unusual kind of French official, for he looked on the situation with amusement, and even gave us personal help. He consulted some printed lists, and announced that the parcel, unfortunately, Messieurs, was not yet acceptable, because in Spain they do not handle parcels that weigh more than ten kilos! It was too heavy. We opened it. What could we discard? Would we need waistcoats in Madrid? No. So out came the waistcoats. Still too heavy. Then we removed a handkerchief, a collar, another, and another. When the clothing had been reduced to the barest possible allowance the parcel weighed an ounce more than ten kilos.

Then you had an idea. Daintily, you removed a moth-ball. With a broadening smile of satisfaction, watching the dial of the scales, you took out two, three, four moth-balls. Ten kilos, juste! The parcel, when sealed again, was legally qualified to be sent to Spain. By this time the clerk was interested in the two people who were sending their clothes to Madrid. He wanted to know about it. When we told him that we were going to walk there and hoped to see the clothes again in two months time, his French mind discovered the weak part of the arrangement at once—the parcel would be lying at the railway station for nearly two months! This interested him much more than a walk to Spain. "Mon Dieu!" he said. "Mais vous aurez des souffrances à payer!—Goodness! Think of what you'll have to pay for storage!" But the Spaniards, we found, do not so penalise the public. For four pesetas we eventually got our parcel, without much trouble or waste of time. In France it might have taken two hours, entailed much writing and formality, and cost a hundred francs.

At last came the night of Saturday, 20th of March. Everything was ready. Our trunks and boxes were in storage, the suits despatched, arrangements about money and the forwarding of mail had been made, our passports were in order, the rucksacks were waiting in a corner, my heavy, new boots were "broken in," and we stood in the clothes that we were to wear on the journey. Nothing had been forgotten. There was nothing to do. So we cleaned our rooms thoroughly, and arranged everything as it had been when we first entered them. Our working days in Paris had come to an end.

FRANCE

"C'était on ne peut plus Guermantes et petit noyau Verdurin."

Proust

I

OVERTURE

SUNDAY morning, early. Pauline rushed in like a gust of mountain air. Were we ready, she asked: the car was waiting. Off we drove, right across Paris, to the Place d'Italie, through the Porte d'Italie, and down the road to Fontainebleau, Ruth, Pauline, you and I, to make a picnic of a day that had otherwise been lost, a gap. It was quite an unimportant, irresponsible outing, but, as I look back on it, there seems to be a meaning there.

In olden times, when the men departed on journeys there were ceremonies and feasting to propitiate the gods. The girls celebrated this rite of departure with us in the forest of Fontainebleau, and were more deeply interested in our journey than we knew. They gave us a day of laughter and fun, and saw to it that nobody did anything more serious than to be buoyantly happy. They bore to the gods who preside over journeys the offering of joy.

What did any of us care for the beauty of the countryside as we drove through that interminable aisle of trees? Nothing. And precisely because we cared nothing the countryside smiled a blessing at us, and was looking its most beautiful. What did we care for the reaches of the Seine? Yet the Seine flashed back the bright promise of rivers to be seen when we should cross the land. What cared we for the felled pines near Barbizon? Yet the pines told us "The air will be fragrant with our life and death along the road you follow." What, too, of the sleepy town and the stately château of Fontainebleau? But the château said "You do well to seek what you cannot find in me," and it was serenely indifferent to our indifference as we passed it by. And what of the gentle wood of Fontainebleau? It rustled with satisfaction at our laughter, for it is old and wise, and remembers much laughter that was not careless.

Because we didn't care, the trees and forests and hills, the waters and rocks of Earth, who also doesn't care, found our senses wide open to them. They received us and we were of them. It was a radiant, clear day, sunny, fresh, holding a promise, and the promise was that we should walk southward into the Spring. None of us knew any of these things except by that inner wisdom that lies deeper than thought, but in the faces of you three I could see an enjoyment that was deeper than fun or gaiety. It was joy, and joy is a devotional feeling. But it does not insist that people should care about anything at the time.

Because we cared about nothing we had the keen appetites that are appropriate in the world of trees and earth and sunshine. The girls had looked well to the tradition of feasting, and we feasted most of the afternoon away. Food that is to be eaten in the open air must be chosen and combined with art; and must be ruthlessly consumed. I think that we were as ruthless as the girls had been artistic.

And it was good that day to be deep in the forest, two men and two women, for the earth-world that cares for nothing works unremittingly for life. When men and women go out into the world together they go as life, but when men go with men they go in pursuit of abstractions, which are only part of life. Women are wise, for they know that life can do without abstractions. When they go out into the world they go with men. But the forest looked upon us, you and Ruth, Pauline and me, and it knew that we had forgotten all about abstractions but were full to the brim with life, and so, it made us drowsy, tired, and satisfied. To be satisfied is the only reward of life.

When we drove along the sandy road out into the glades in the late afternoon to go back to Paris, we cared so little that we lost our way, and we didn't even care about that. We found delightful villages, far from trains and highroads, and we found one that would be the right place in which to live. But we cared so little that I have forgotten its name, so it must be lost. In its old church we made offerings of pence to St. Anthony of Padua, and we drove on, to gather great sprays of white hawthorn and prunelle from the hedges.

You relieved Pauline at the wheel and she rested, leaning on my shoulder, as Ruth had been resting on yours, and we drove on through the clear night, on the long, straight highroad, for the way had found itself, though not the one we sought. Even in Paris I could feel the life of things that do not care, that night, for did not the gendarme who stopped us to ask why there was no rear light on the car, let us pass, though Pauline could not produce all the papers the owner of a car must carry in France? Oh, the river lights were starry, and the sky was clear, that last night in Paris.

When we got back to the mouldy little cottage the rooms refused to know that they would next day be forsaken. They received us like a place where people tarry for the night. They received us with the offer of repose. And, that last night in Paris, I slept well.

GOTHIC NORTH

II

THE DAY OF ADJUSTMENT

I DID not feel the thrill of starting. Oh, doubt not that I felt the satisfaction! But the true thrill of being launched at last into freedom was not there. I looked covertly at you: you seemed to be in a state of exaltation and I envied you—I had so anticipated this beginning, pictured it in my mind a hundred times, but it was not like the pictures. Yet I was not disappointed. Rather was I interested to find in what ways it was different from the start I had imagined.

Dominating all my imaginary beginnings of this journey were two ideas. I thought that we would steal out, escape from Paris in the dawn—that I would not allow the light of the day of beginning to dawn on Paris. And I thought there would be no past; that my whole being would be directed towards the days that were to unroll before us; would be absorbed in contemplation of the boundless chances of the road; that the life before me would eclipse the life behind.

But we passed through the Porte d'Orléans at ten o'clock, and the morning had been given to things that were not of the road to Spain. We had risen at six and I realised with astonishment that breakfast was to be a part of that day. We had prepared and eaten food, washed vessels and handled brooms. We had paid visits of farewell to our landlady, who kissed us, to the concierge who did not, but whose God-speed was nevertheless warm and sincere, and to kindly tradespeople in our quartier whom it is still pleasant to remember. We had made a journey of more than an hour on the subterranean railways of Paris, changing trains twice, emerging finally from the pit mouth at the Porte d'Orléans to find that we were only then at the starting point though the morning was no longer young.

And the past refused to renounce life. My body was walking steadily southward, but my mind stayed for a time at the Porte d'Orléans looking both ways like Janus, but looking at first more behind than before. In there, inside the walls, was Paris. Paris that has neither heart nor soul but nevertheless has a spirit, a spirit unique. Never would we be able to repeat the experience of the past four months in Paris. It was all left behind. Weeks of careful forethought, of arrangements and preparation; the purchasing; the selecting and discarding, a dozen times revised and modified, were at an end. And the biggest thing we were discarding was Paris itself.

I had been obsessed with arrangements and here, at the starting point, they had stopped. There was nothing more to arrange. I examined this military habit of starting-points with distaste, wondering why I had selected a starting-point, but this one did not belong to the military family of starting-points at all. This one was a symbol. Arrangements came with us as far as the Porte d'Orléans but they couldn't get out—the poor things had to stay in Paris. But *we* went out, and from the Porte d'Orléans were utterly free from arrangements, duties, obligations, work, friends, relatives, and all the common life of men. Distance, time, and money mattered nothing to us, for we were *prepared*, and who was to care where we slept by night or went by day, now? We were at last vagabonds, carrying nothing that was not needed—carrying little indeed of anything that *was* needed—following no will but our own, with but one object in the world.

You seemed like an arrow speeding far and singing through the wind and your mark was Madrid. I was more slowly rising into the air, for great cities hold me and Paris was only gradually letting go. The crowds, the gay boulevards, the gardens would all wake up to the Spring so soon, without us. Paris in the Spring—is it not something that people journey from far places to see? The chestnuts would be in bloom along the Champs Elysées soon, but our backs were turned, and—we would meet the Spring before it came to the Champs Elysées. But oh, it was gallant, that start in the fresh, cool morning. The knapsacks on our backs weighed nothing, our bodies were straight, the rhythm of our pace was strong, and the idea of fatigue seemed a quaint fancy.

There is no better, quicker way of leaving Paris behind than to take the road to Orléans. On all other sides the factories and garish suburbs of the banlieue form a fringe around the city like an ugly growth of seaweed on a rock, but on the south, where the Seine is far away, the fringe is thin. True, the faubourg stretches nearly five kilometres, to Bourg-la-Reine, the paved road is straight, tramlines flank it on both sides, and the first two kilometres are unsightly. Unsightly because the neighbourhood is poor, because the road is lined with petrol pumps, and because on certain days a tawdry market, like the Halle aux Puces, encumbers the roadside. But two kilometres of unsightliness on the outskirts of a metropolis are a matter for wonder rather than complaint, and once past them green fields show between, behind, the houses that line the road to Bourg-la-Reine.

We talked of that suburban countryside. Far away from the road were little cottages in fields, little patches of estate development with new streets, on the gently rolling hills. It seemed to you to be the kind of country where war happens. You didn't know why; and I didn't know why we should both be thinking of war at that time. We had passed a fort of the outer circuit, and I had been wondering what rôle it played not so many years ago, and what rôle it had played many years ago when Paris was besieged. Somewhere, during that first hour, we must have passed places where outposts, barriers, and trenches had been thrown across the road in 1870, but there is no sign of them now. The traces of war do not last many years.

Bourg-la-Reine to me is the end of Paris. It is green, and open enough to find room for nurseries of exotic trees, pines from all over the world, trees from all over the world, of any kind that will grow in the climate of Paris. The road here is in a shallow valley, a convenient valley that lies on the line joining Paris and Orléans. The little river Bièvre flows in it, towards the Seine. It flows to the city wall and is thence carefully conducted through Paris, hidden underground most of the way, but it is allowed to emerge to form the ponds in the Jardin des Plantes. Things flow to Paris from afar. At Bourg-la-Reine Paris ends. But far away beyond, it still holds the mind, and claims the toil and tribute of the countryside. We were passing by fields of cabbages, gardens of vegetables to feed the city, in one of them a woman bent to the task of weeding.

Close to where the straight road crosses the bent little river we halted to rest. The first hour of our journey was over. We had decided to walk no more than thirty kilometres a day during the first week, and no faster than five kilometres an hour at any time. We would walk for fifty minutes and rest for ten, soldier fashion, all the way. Well, how had we fared? When I measured it on the map I found that we had walked eight kilometres! Five miles an hour! Truly, we were in a state of excessive enthusiasm and must regulate the pace; by observing the milestones, which, of course, were kilometre stones here (there is no happy French word for milestones); and by observing your gold-cased Hamilton watch. That watch always seemed to me far too handsome a possession for a vagabond, and far too handsome to have any right to be so exact a timekeeper. It was out of harmony with our attire, and you should have carried an Ingersoll. But it said that our ten minutes were up.

We must presently have crossed the line that separates the department of Seine from Seine-et-Oise, but we did not yet know the signs of such changes and we noticed nothing. The little department of Seine is a convenience to allow Paris to spread, and once over the line we should have ceased to feel Paris at all, but nothing was different. We merely started to climb a long, low hill. But, on this hill I felt a difference. The land was rolling like the sea. In great, shallow folds it was rolling towards us, under us, right up to the hard rock of Paris with its seaweed fringes. How like a huge boulder Paris looks, on the map! Once over the hill I felt that we were facing a freshness like that of the sea, and Paris, long lost to material vision, seemed to vanish like the setting sun. We stopped again to rest.

This time we had walked five kilometres, your feet were hurting, and we both took off our boots to rest the better.

I am not going to pretend that this first day (or many another day) was one of ecstasy for me. Ecstasy endures only for moments, and even joy is too intense a feeling to last for long. But it was a day of growing wonder, growing pleasure, and of increasing realisation that we had started on the journey. Sunday had been too wonderful to enable me to carry such feelings into this day. I think I had my leap into the joy of starting at the moment when the plan was born, weeks before in Paris. That is when I really set out for Spain. But this first day, with its adjustments, even to little adjustments of our packs, is a remembrance bright and clear as that of a first day should be. I was going to Spain, you were with me, and we were learning together how to walk along the road.

La belle France is not everywhere so *belle* as her untravelled, patriotic inhabitants believe. There is a great deal of country, especially in the north, that can only be described as uninteresting, and the country we saw this first day was frankly uninteresting to me. Great, low rolls of hill we crossed; between them the little rivers that flow to the Seine. Straight roads lined with trees, like hundreds of kilometres of other roads I had seen in northern France. Woods, farms, commonplace towns, all, I thought, mournfully affected by the proximity of Paris. Hybrid farming it is, in that country, lacking the dignity of things done on a big scale or the crowded neatness and colour of things done on a small, intensive scale. Devoid of character, neither of the town nor of the country, but of both. Raw houses, like the new houses of the suburbs, standing alone, inhabited by farmers; here or there a lonely café by the road, to attract motorists; the traffic not the slow, honest, country traffic, but the kind that belongs to towns, swift, heedless. Any other road would have taken us through more woodland, but no other road led to Orléans. We were seeing this country where it had been contaminated by a great main road, but we know that it smiles freshly enough elsewhere, even much closer to Paris, away from the main roads. But it remains uninteresting. For all its little woods, rows of trees, and sprinkled houses, it is open, monotonous, melancholy, rolling like the sea.

The incidents of this first day were slight. We lunched at a restaurant at Longjumeau, a drab little town on the Yvette. I wondered that it could ever have inspired an opera, "*Le Postillion de Longjumeau*" (they still play it in Vienna) and I wondered what the opera could be about. The restaurant was hard to find, we accepted what was put before us because it seemed to be the custom there, and we suspected that we were eating horseflesh. A man at a neighbouring table wanted to tell us of his experiences as a prisoner of war in Germany, and we found him tiresome. But Longjumeau had one point in its favour: it seemed never to have heard of Paris.

Arpajon, twelve kilometres further south, on the little river Orge, is more pretentious, livelier. The afternoon was warm and the companionship of several miles of light railway beside the road had been depressing. We wanted beer, so we went into a café. Madame la patronne was playing cards with three men, and ignored our thirsty presence until it pleased her to move. She served us deux demis of a good bière brune and again we ceased to exist. This unconcern is only apparent. Had we tried to leave without paying, Madame would have shown a terrifying amount of energy. Madame la patronne in cafés in France leads an automatic official life. She sees and does everything without having to think about it. The "Au revoir, Messieurs, et merci," as we went out of the door was quite impersonal—*we* did not exist, but customers were departing, the form of politeness was being observed, automatically. It seems to mean nothing, but it marks the difference between apathetic peace and relentless war, in France.

From the café we went to the church, a small, clean church, very old, satisfying in its beauty but not remarkable. Our entry was observed and we felt, clad as we were with packs on our backs, very like tourists who spend a few hurried moments on a "sight" in passing.

I had marked, as our halting place for the night, a village called Bas-de-Torfou, about four kilometres beyond Arpajon and thirty from Paris. Our pace had been irregular, we had not yet learned to walk steadily five kilometres an hour, and were well ahead of time. We got to Bas-de-Torfou at about four o'clock in the afternoon, and the "village" proved to be two or three cottages and a café by the roadside, a place not likely to be able to lodge us, and it seemed far too early to end the day—this walking was great fun.

We were thirsty and thought we might as well prospect the café. It actually had a notice "chambres pour voyageurs," so we could stay there for the night if we liked! It proved to be delightful. There were three women inside sewing, pleasant, intelligent people who accepted us so naturally that we all fell to talking. You had coffee, I think, and I had red wine, and we told them of the kind of world we knew, of America and Australia, and of walking to Spain. These people, especially a young woman, asked many sensible questions, but they were not inquisitive and they listened to our answers with interest. They may have been peasants, they may have been educated bourgeoises from a provincial town—it was hard to say; but they were exceptional. Few people in the country in France accept strangers so frankly. They work hard and seek amusement in their free time, but they do not meet life as an entertainment.

Should we stay here? We discussed it rapidly in English. It was very early. There was a town not much further on. There was nothing interesting near Bas-de-Torfou itself. And, delightful as these people were, the French hold fast to that which is good, and they would probably expect us to talk until bedtime. We decided not to stay, so, paying our little account and saying nothing about rooms, we set off for the next town with cordial wishes of bon voyage. It is interesting that they did not ask us where we intended to stop for the night; asked us no personal questions.

Soon after leaving Bas-de-Torfou the road climbs over a steep rocky ridge, wooded with pines. It was the same formation we had seen the day before near Fontainebleau, the classical Fontainebleau limestone. The grey boulders of this rock are deceptive enough to convince a careless geologist that they are granite. The ridge is a part of the ring-like margin of the lands called the Paris Basin, and once across it we were in a new country. But we began to be overtaken by the dusk, and the new "land of Beauce" did not impress itself upon us that day.

While we were climbing a long hill we met two beggars, men of the road. One, who was going our way, we allowed to overtake and pass us during our ten-minute spell. The other, coming towards us, asked for bread. He seemed a decent fellow, poorly clad, footsore, and tired. We had no food in our packs and could not offer money: we had little enough money and little idea, as yet, of what our daily expenses would be. Besides, how many beggars might we not meet between here and Madrid? But in his resigned "Bon soir" I felt an accusation that he by no means intended to convey. I had allowed myself beer and wine that day. His was a serious business, mine an indulgence.

I may say here, however, that we met only one other tramp the whole way across France, and I remember none in Spain. It is not that there are no beggars in France—there are enough in Paris and the towns, but the country roads are vigilantly patrolled by the gendarmerie, as we soon found out. I know not if this be admirable or otherwise, for to think about it is to wonder, not to decide. Some communes do not allow wanderers to camp within their confines, and in many parts of France persons travelling on foot are all suspect.

The descent of the hill brought us to a wide, pleasant valley, that of the Juine; a main railway line to the east, and beside it a large electric transformer station. This is the main line from Paris to Orléans, and has only just been electrified.

The transformer station had an air of wizardry, standing as it did out in the open fields, an infinitely complex, delicate, yet large construction with no moving parts. There were dazzling lights about it but it seemed deserted. Since then, on this journey and after, I have seen many such things, power stations, power lines, in the French Alps, Bavaria, Denmark, Switzerland, Austria, Northern Italy. They are a curious part of the modern landscape, to be found in the loneliest places, yet the modern mind accepts them æsthetically—they do no violence to the landscape. They link the cities with remote fastnesses of the mountains, yet they are not an invasion. Men are leaving the mountains, putting machines there in place of themselves. The mechanisms, like a silent mystery, conquer but do not trample the land.

Before us was Etréchy, the village where we would sleep. It was bigger than we expected, a town rather than a village, and we felt suddenly tired as we walked through the dark, deserted street looking for an inn. Few people, it seemed, want to stay in Etréchy. After having passed through about a kilometre of the town we saw an inn. The room we entered was crowded, noisy, and we were met with insolent stares. There was a lull in the conversation and then it was resumed in undertones. A girl in a back kitchen, who seemed to be the authority, said they could not lodge us. *Impossible!* But there was an hotel on the other side, further back.

It was twenty past seven, getting late. We went to the hotel, a dark place, the entrance leading into the restaurant, a plain room with bare wooden tables. A small miss heard our request and went into a side room. A consultation took place in there and we waited. She came out, said that Monsieur would presently attend to us, and did we want dinner? We did. We still waited. Eventually a "mine host" came slowly from the inner room, a tall, dark, arrogant man who will some day be portly. Well, why didn't we sit to the table? Dinner was coming. And who were we, anyway? He inspected us majestically; others came and inspected us. Rooms? We wanted rooms? That would be all right; he had rooms. But would *a* room do—two beds, of course? All right, he was busy, would come back later. He withdrew to resume the game of cards with his clients.

The dinner came: first a good pot au feu such as I had forgotten; then followed meat, and salad. Did we want anything to drink? We asked for vin rouge. The miss held another consultation with Monsieur and we were supplied with Bordeaux rouge. We had our suspicions, for in Paris he who orders Bordeaux rouge pays more than he who is content with plain vin rouge, but we were tired. Our dinner was soon over, later arrivals were being served (with vin rouge) and still we waited.

At last, miss brought Monsieur. Wanted to go to our rooms, did we? All right. He was disposed to be inquisitive, to find out all about us, but we were tired enough to be firm and were tired of awaiting Monsieur's pleasure. Would he kindly show us up to the rooms *now*? We followed him up three flights of stairs into an attic and were shown a little room under the roof. We said it would do and he lit the candle and left us in peace. How cold it was! The linen on my bed seemed to have been used, but yours was fresh. You opened the window and announced a fine view, a clear moon over the river and the woodland of Beauce. How tired we were. How sore. Ablutions for the feet. Bed. Who'll blow out the candle? Thirty-seven kilometres, pace bad. Paris? There wasn't any such place as Paris.

III

LA BEAUCE

OUR muscles were stiff the next morning and we were not as early as we wanted to be. For breakfast, the light French breakfast of coffee and bread, we were served coffee in large china bowls, basins. I had known those basins well in northern France and Flanders and had forgotten about them. They made me feel here that I was not in a strange country, but in an old, familiar one. Coffee was served to us in similar bowls nearly everywhere in France after this, except in the towns, where the tall stalked glasses always reappeared.

The important thing this morning was our bill. The value of the franc was always changing at that time, and we had little idea of the fair price of bed and board in the country. It had been impossible to make an estimate of daily expenditure either for France or Spain, owing to this instability of the exchanges. How much would Monsieur charge? He charged in all twenty-eight francs, for the room, dinners, and petits déjeuners. This seemed reasonable in spite of the Bordeaux rouge, and we found by experience that it was, considering the proximity of Paris. We paid an average of thirty francs a day for dinners, beds, and light breakfasts, all the way across France. Our opinion of Monsieur improved.

Once out in the street we found that walking was a stiff business, but concluded that the best thing for the stiffness would be more walking. The department of Seine-et-Oise has placed not only kilometre stones, but also hectometre stones along the roads. We should pass one hectometre stone a minute, a very convenient arrangement. It was not far from the town to the open road; around a bend, under a railway bridge, and around another bend, and there was the aisle of tall elms and the great route nationale.

We were walking on the side of the road, having just made what I will call an "arrêt de nécessité." Two gendarmes on bicycles were coming towards us. They swerved to our side, and, with a signal to us, dismounted in a business-like way.

"Messieurs, if you please, your papers of legalisation." (They called them "pieces of identity.") We produced our passports and cartes d'identité. One scrutinised yours, the other mine, and then they exchanged them. The papers were found to be in order and were handed back politely. They asked what we were doing, where we were going. With gendarmes it is well to tell the whole truth, and when we said "to Spain," they became very interested and wanted to know a lot. One of them suddenly looked at you and said:

"But you can't go in *those* boots!"

I thought there was something legally wrong with the boots, but it was only that they were too light, not "practical" boots. We listened to a dissertation on boots. The other man wanted to know the roads we proposed to take. I showed him on the map and he criticised the plan severely. No road but the route nationale, it seemed, was suitable to take to Spain. The side roads, country roads, were poor, bad, they said, while here, on the great route nationale we would have an excellent surface, no mud, no stones, all the way. We thought of the twenty-five kilometres of hard pavé we had traversed the preceding day, before we came to the asphalt surface. They thought, doubtless, of the gendarmes who would "supervise" us along the route nationale. They were emphatic; the main roads were the only roads fit for the use of gentlemen walking to Spain. We thanked them very much, and they said goodbye cordially enough and rode off.

You used to say that all the little conductors in the Paris Metro are the same man. I think that all gendarmes are the same man—all but one, and we will come to him later. They are all offensively healthy and strong, splendid examples of the dark, round-faced, thick-set variety of *Homo gallicus*, and they all have the same manner, an air of being impartially ready to shake hands or put you in handcuffs according to the state of your "papers of legalisation."

Almost as soon as these two were gone, a bicycle whizzed past from behind, and a cheerful voice called out:

"Où allez vous comme ça?—Where are you off to, dressed like that?" It was a young soldier, a happy, energetic-looking boy, and to him we replied:

"A Orléans."

"A Orléans? Oh, bonne chance!—To Orléans! Wish you luck!" shouted the boy in amused astonishment (fancy anybody walking *that* far!)

It was the first friendly greeting of the road, but the information we gave was the kind we had decided to give to all inquiring persons except gendarmes. We would announce to everybody who asked, that the next city on the road was our destination. Rural Frenchmen do not understand foreign people who walk to Spain—there are trains, which are much quicker—and they want the whole explanation of why it is being done.

We went on, up the valley of the Juine, through the land of Beauce. It is a pretty land there, but what it may be like in its expanse I know not, for we were to cross no more than a corner of it. I would say, as a geographer who had a map in his pocket, that it is a land rich in farms but poor in trees. Trees and forests make the map look green. The Paris Basin is green on our map, but la Beauce is not. It has many villages, and many good roads between them, so many that they look like a net on the map. But along the Juine there are woods and pastures, and the real Beauce we never saw.

Why is it called la Beauce? France, before the Revolution, was divided into provinces; and from remote antiquity the people have used names for those parts of the country that have character, that are, indeed, little countries in themselves. Many of these "little countries" were actually provinces, natural units, and their old names are called *noms de pays*. Artois, Gascony, les Landes, Provence, Chablais, are all noms de pays. When the revolution came France was divided into departments, which were given quite other names, and the old provinces and noms de pays disappeared from the map. But not from use. The peasants are closer to the heart of France than the government, and the peasant of to-day still says that he lives in Picardy, the Gâtinais, Normandy, though his "country" may have been severed into three pieces by departmental boundaries. And so it is too, in Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, Spain—perhaps throughout Europe; the land consists of provinces that are a tradition, but their boundaries are not to be seen on the map.

We saw, here in Beauce, a beautiful château on the far side of the river, the first of many châteaux. It was concealed by the woods, except from one place, where a lane through the trees displayed it like a jewel. It had the musical balance and the soft yellow tint of many of the famous châteaux, and it spoke of a France that has gone out of existence. The woods hid it quickly from view, but the road brought us opposite the old, thatched buildings of what perhaps used to be the home farm, all mellow and beautiful as a farm in England.

The next bend of the road brought us in sight of Etampes, and over Etampes there presides a real castle, the first of many castles, ruined, it is true, but thus the more interesting. How it excited you! No matter how long it might take, you were going to explore that castle. I caught your mood, and the stiffness in our limbs disappeared like a morning mist before the sun. But steady—no more than a hectometre a minute!

We had some interest in Etampes. We knew it was a large town, for the gendarmes had told us we would have to pass through "trois kilomètres de ville," and our landlady in Paris had offered us (for a consideration) the use of her "country house at Etampes, which has an artist's studio." What the town really does I do not know. I know that it prints books, for some of Romain Rolland's books were printed there. But it is possible, with the aid of a map, to take in the geographical meaning of such a town at a glance, especially if the glance be from the battlements of a ruined castle. It is on a stretch of the Juine that lies exactly on the line that joins Paris and Orléans, like the Bièvre. It is at the junction of three little valleys, and lies at the crossroads where the way from Chartres to Fontainebleau crosses the way from Paris to Orléans; and it is in the corner of la Beauce that points to Paris, a place where the "pays" can easily collect all that it wants to send there. Roads and railways meet naturally at Etampes. What better reasons could a place have for its existence?

It is necessary to see places, as we saw them, in order to understand them in this way; and with large places, cities, even this is not enough. I cannot tell you why little Rambouillet, which I have not seen, lies where it is, nor why big Orléans, which I have seen, is there. Months after this journey of ours was over I chanced to pass through Etampes, yes, and Etréchy too, and Orléans, in the train. They did not seem at all like the places where we went on foot, and they spoke no language that I could understand.

We went up over the railway line and climbed the hill to the castle. For a franc the custodian gave us a great iron key that might have been the genuine key of the castle. With difficulty we unbolted the heavy wooden door and passed in. A roofless ruin, with great passages and perilous winding stairways in the massive walls. There were unexpected signs of the richness and decoration of the interior; fragments of groined ceilings, and fancifully carved bosses where arches had sprung from the walls. We climbed to the battlements and looked over Etampes, a fair town, with three noble old churches, one with traceries of the fourteenth century, another much older, grand and simple. Descending, we studied the archers' "field of fire" through many slits. Whoever planned that castle knew his business—every approach was perfectly covered. It was worth the franc and the time. What were you dreaming of there while you climbed about like a monkey? Of a France, a

Europe of castles, that passed out of existence long before the time of the France of châteaux?

We made our way out of Etampes across little waterways that run through the end of the town. There were ducks in them and beside them were covered sheds where women come to bend over the stream and wash clothes. On the edge of the town were vegetable gardens, a few fruit trees, and there was a feeling in the air that made the trembling moment between leaftime and blossomtime seem very close.

We took a road that led up the valley of the Juine, a white, dirt road, not recommended by the gendarmes, but pleasant indeed to people walking. The main road to Orléans lies further to the west, but we expected things of this less frequented, alternative road. We went up the wooded valley past villages I have forgotten—Ormoy, Boissy-la-Rivière. At Ormoy an old gentleman (he seemed to be an old gentleman) studied our packs and asked inquiringly :

"Vous faites voyage?—You're on a journey?"

We answered pleasantly: "Oui, Monsieur," and passed on. The old gentleman looked puzzled. We were bound for Saclas, and lunch.

The day was warm and the brook invited us to bathe, but the nice places were all in private property, behind fences, and somewhat exposed to view. The winding valley was getting narrower and there were piles of cut timber on the roadside. Soon came Saclas, a silent village asleep in the heat. A talkative old woman in a cool café said we could eat our lunch there, if we bought it in the village: she would let us have bread and wine. Two gendarmes passed down the street, so we allowed a reasonable time to elapse. A fine car hesitated in the sunny little square, like a brawling disturber of an enchanted slumber. I felt that the old lady of the café was the only person in Saclas who was not sleeping. I went out and found a tiny shop and bought sausage and cheese, the transaction a little slow on account of the country habit of reckoning in sous instead of francs. It upsets me to be asked to pay seventeen sous, but you were always able to convert it into comprehensible terms with surprising rapidity—you grocer. As we ate our lunch the old lady put us through an examination. But she knew all about the Americans. During the war there was an American aviation depôt near Saclas, and they used to come down to the café, braves garçons. The lunch cost us Fcs. 10.65, far too much for a picnic lunch. We decided that we must do something about lunch—we would see to-morrow.

On the other side of the stream from Saclas lies St. Cyr-la-Rivière, hugging the steep valley wall. The road here climbs up the steep, over the embanked railway, and ascends to the highland. Two kilometres past St. Cyr, at a crossroads, we came to the top. A new country lay before us. We had left the pretty land of Beauce and were in the Gâtinais, a country we will not forget.

IV

THE HOSPITALITY OF HAYSTACKS

> **Il est affreusement difficile de parler à un paysan**
> **sans l'inquiéter, d'accorder son langage au sien.**
> *Alain-Fournier*

THE GÂTINAIS! We had heard of it, for we used to buy "miel surfin du Gâtinais—the best Gâtinais honey" during our housekeeping days in Paris, and our landlady once presented us with a little earthenware jar of this honey, booty from the house in Etampes, no doubt. But where in France the Gâtinais might be I did not know, then.

And this was the Gâtinais! It was incredible, and I looked at it almost in fear, for there was not a tree, not a plant, nothing but limitless distance, unrelieved monotone. It was a bare expanse of ploughland, rising and falling imperceptibly, and behind the long, flat waves, the sky. The country itself seemed to be in the sky, open, high, high up, out of the world. Larks were the only living things we could see, larks in such numbers that it seemed to be the uncontested kingdom of the larks, their native land. Millet has painted that empty solitude.

There was nothing on which the eye might rest but haystacks, round, narrow below but spreading upward, with conical tops; haystacks in rare groups of two or three, the distant ones half hidden behind the waves. Haystacks—and mournful villages, far away.

far apart, a lean tower rising above one or two, into the wind. I looked, and feared that a traveller might starve in that stark, empty land which mysteriously produces honey.

Later, we came to know the silhouettes of ploughmen and their teams passing slowly across the sky in the dusk or early morning, and to know that men were working in the fields, lost in the troughs, invisible. We learned that the land is old, older than the roads that lead to Pithiviers, the only town, a town aloof. Chance alone will bring the stranger's road across the Gâtinais to a village; for the village was there before the road, and the stranger's road leads *across* the Gâtinais, not to villages. We learnt that the moist soil, undrained by streams, is deep and rich. We learnt that life, in this land without adornment, has turned its back to the empty world, turned in upon itself, rallied into tiny fortresses that mock the wind and open their gates to no man.

Such was the Gâtinais in March.

In Summer it is a perfumed sea of lucerne and clover and wheat, a prairie, rich in the endless repetition of the same wealth.

We advanced. How would we fare in this forbidding country? We would laugh at it, defy it. Were we not free? It was time for our spell and we stopped at the first haystacks, for we could not rest where there was nothing: people need to rest *against* things; and a haystack, we found, is a good shelter for ten minutes' repose but a poor one for certain rites that Nature compels us to perform regularly; curious effects on the mind from this open exposure of the land.

We moved on, and a few minutes walking brought us in sight of a man at work on the road. Beyond the man, for a long distance, the condition of the road was different, the surface newly repaired. The man was exactly on the boundary of the departments of Seine-et-Oise and Loiret, and he was finishing the work to be done by Loiret. Beside the road was his bicycle. He talked in a reserved but searching way, telling us that he came from Acquebouille, twelve kilometres further south, and that a compatriot of ours, an Englishman, lived there. He insisted that we must visit this Englishman.

We went on and on. A village came in sight ahead of us, a village that presented the mud walls of its yards to the outside world. There were many large haystacks close to the walls, and on the other side of the road was a walled cemetery. The village was not on the road, but to one side, and only chance had brought the line of the road close to it. It was the village of Autruy, and here we should spend the night, for the place was at the end of our day's distance.

We found the inn, and went inside, where a woman and a couple of children received us with a cold hostility. Cautiously we ordered coffee, and while drinking it we asked for lodging. A man was called and consulted. No, we could not have lodging—no. There was no explanation, merely a slow, immovable refusal. We asked where in the village we could find a room, and a house up the road was pointed out. We went there and said to the small, middle-aged woman who received us that we had been directed there by people in the village. She admitted that she had a room but her son was home; it was occupied. No, there was nowhere else in the village. It was awkward, she agreed, but her son was home; she could do nothing. But she was sure that if we went further on, to the next village, we would find lodgings. Oui, sans doute—in the next village. We examined the front of her house, a café-restaurant, newly painted. The family quarters appeared to be downstairs, while upstairs? Upstairs we were sure that there were rooms. We walked on.

The next village, Gironville, was four kilometres away, and a kilometre off the road, a place too tiny to have a church. An old man told us that it was absurd even to try to find quarters there, that there was not the least chance that anyone would even let us pass the night in a barn; but at Charmont, he said, there was an hotel!

Charmont was another two kilometres along a muddy track. It was dusk. On another track a car was going towards the village and it gave us hope, for a car here probably meant a stranger. When we got to the hotel we argued long with the fat patronne, and two men, one a half-wit, added their advice to the discussion. The hotel would give us dinner, anything to eat that we liked to order, but, most emphatically, it would not lodge us. At the far end of the village they said there was a place we might try, the last house.

Two thin, colourless women there assured us in a not unfriendly but final way that it was no use, they could not give us a room.

But why, they asked, did we not go to the next village, Allainville, three and a half kilometres west on the other side of the main road? It was *chef lieu du canton* (a kind of county capital), and we would be sure to be accepted. We thought that Allainville would have gone to bed by the time we got there, for it was already late, and we were very hungry.

We found the bakery and bought bread in the dark. We found a grocery and bought sardines and chocolate. We went back to the thin women and bought two *canettes* of local beer. A canette is a half-litre bottle with a porcelain stopper fastened to the neck by a steel spring and provided with a rubber washer. The thin women were almost cordial. This time we had asked something they could do. Beer, yes; but beds, no. They were very pleased.

With this unpleasant assortment of nourishment we walked out of Charmont muttering. Just outside the village were haystacks. You made a sudden decision. We would sleep there, in that haystack, and not go a step further that night. We had done thirty-three kilometres and explored a castle at Etampes, and would any other village in this land be different from the three we had tried? We went to the haystack and ate some of our unpalatable food. You were beginning to enjoy the idea, for you had talked many times of sleeping in haystacks on this journey, and you recalled that Pauline had found it "not too bad" one night when she lost her way on a bicycle tour in England the Summer before. I was thinking that this was March, not August, and that the night was frostily clear: but a haystack seemed to be the only bed we would find.

You prepared the hay, dry hay in a stack that was partly demolished, and we rolled our coats around us to sleep. You slept at intervals that night. I had often slept in worse places not so many years before, but there, in the hay, I could not sleep. It was miserably cold, and the wind penetrated the shelter. A fine dust of hay invaded eyes, nose, ears, hair, and clothing. We huddled together to get warm, but my limbs were stiff and painful from cold and fatigue, and I could not get warm. I listened to the barking of dogs, mice rustling in the hay, noises of the night, a car on the road, voices in the village, workers going out before dawn to the fields. But it was rest from walking, so we endured it until half-past five in the morning. Then, we made a kind of dry toilet, adjusted our clothing, and set out for Acquebouille.

We drank many cups of strong coffee and ate some of our bread there in a cheerless room, and again met our cyclist friend, the road man. He showed us where the Englishman lived, and at seven o'clock in the morning we paid him a visit.

Houses of the Gâtinais are all built of sun-dried bricks and straw. There are stables and barns around a walled yard; there are mud and poultry, and acrid stable smells. In these most incongruous surroundings we found Mr. William Wilson, and he proved to be a Scotsman. Through the open door of the kitchen we saw Mrs. Wilson making coffee, and our greeting in English almost frightened her. Mr. Wilson was just getting up, and his two associates or employées, Henry, a Czec, and Djannot, a Roumanian, presented themselves before he appeared. We all talked while the household had breakfast, and I drank more coffee. What a merry morning party we made! So merry that you and I forgot the haystack even while we were talking about it.

The Wilsons are approaching middle age, living in France because it suits his occupation of bee-keeping. The cyclist had told us with admiration that they "did very well" the previous year. They had been in France over four years, first near Toulouse, then here, and Mr. Wilson said that he loved both France and the French, though they have never learnt the language. He told us of the honey industry, how the hives are placed in the pine copses we would see south of the village, and how the honey is prepared for export at Pithiviers, fifteen kilometres off to the east. He said that the whole of the Gâtinais could not produce the quantity of "best Gâtinais honey" that is sold in Paris alone. He deals widely in bees and was next day sending a consignment to the Spanish border in the Citroën waggon.

They were amused at our experience. It was, they said, characteristic of the region. The people of the rich Gâtinais are well-off—"little millionaires," he called them—because there is fortune in fodder crops during these post-war years in France. The few francs gained by lodging a stranger are not worth the trouble. He himself could not hire assistance from the neighbourhood, and his associates were, as we saw, foreigners. He had tried for two years to get a girl or woman from the district to help his wife in the house, but nobody wanted the situation; they were too well-off to have to go into domestic service. But they were fine, good people, he maintained. They had been hostile and suspicious of him at first, but when they understood what he was doing they gave him their confidence, and he was no longer looked upon as a stranger there.

It was a delightful household, and the interior of this cheerless Gâtinais farmhouse was familiarly cosy and unforeign, a Scotsman's home. We left with regret, but we wanted to walk on towards Spain, and were feeling none the worse for our uncomfortable night. Henry, who has more interests than bee-keeping (he is a good linguist and organises conducted tours), asked us to look for him at the Café du Dôme where the Americans congregate, when we returned to Paris. The Gâtinais is full of unexpected things.

Not far from Acquebouille we came to the first of the little pine-woods, young, compact plantations that increased, I think, the severity of the landscape. We turned aside to look at some of Mr. Wilson's hives, and about four kilometres further on we left the main road.

At Bazoches-les-Gallerandes we found a restored church, large and spacious. Further on we came to a big farm, a place where modern methods and modern implements are being employed, the only isolated farm we saw in the region. Beyond it the road was a grassy track with deep wheel ruts and in the late morning we sat down and ate what was left of our bread of the night before. A man with his team passed by while we sat there, going back to the village for the midday meal.

At Aschères-le-Marche was another large, restored church, bare and white within. But we were still hungry and we thought ourselves entitled to a meal in a restaurant, so we left the church and found the Restaurant Vappereau. It was a good déjeuner, with hors d'œuvres and two meat courses. But we paid Fcs. 16.50 for that lunch, and realised clearly that we must do something about lunch to-morrow, for this was more than we could afford. As the patron pleased us, we thought we would seek his advice; make sure, if possible, that we would sleep in beds that night. He recommended a little hotel at the very place we had marked on the map, a business that was "in the family" and, he said, with his card we could be sure of acceptance.

Leaving Aschères, we pleasantly missed the road and crossed some fields. We met some jolly ploughmen who offered us their job for ours, and we went on towards Villereau. Rest time brought us to some great haystacks, the finest we had seen, and I perversely endangered them by smoking a cigarette in their shelter. The country here seemed to be changing. The day was superb, almost dazzling, and we felt very content. Bazoches and Aschères were better villages than we had seen for many miles, open, with large houses, imposing churches, more shops, and they seemed almost to be inviting in the warm sun. In the centre of each was a big, shallow pond, and around each were gardens, hedges, fruit trees ready to bloom. And here were these great haystacks, works of art, the largest and best we had seen. The route nationale, a couple of miles off, was lined with young trees, and far beyond it we could see the fine spire of Neuville-aux-Bois. To the south lay a forest. Truly, the world was different, and we realised that we were no longer in the Gâtinais—it had softened into something more friendly between Bazoches and Aschères.

Villereau too had a large, restored church and *two* duck-ponds, and the map said that we would soon come to a little brook, the Nan. Our minds were made up; in the Nan we would bathe. But the Nan was dry. We followed its bed to the main road, and turned aside into the fringe of the forest for our spell. We took off our boots and I lay on the ground, but you, you climbed trees in your stockinged feet. You were in high spirits, and I think you were thumbing your nose at the Gâtinais from up there.

V

THE PRIEST OF ST. LYE

WHILE you were up in the tree you pointed out a figure in black skirts, a priest, cycling gaily down the road towards Neuville. We said scurrilous things about virgins and prepared to continue walking. We went up the hill and met, coming towards us, a woman wheeling a perambulator in which a cripple girl was lying. Before we got to the top of the hill the cycling virgin overtook us on his return, and called out a very hearty good-day. We were a little surprised.

At the top of the hill was the village of St. Lyé, our destination, and right beside the main road the Hôtel Vappereau, recommended at Achères. It was a small, attractive place for its kind, and we were most pleasantly received and accepted even before presenting our credentials. As it was only five o'clock we had a beer, and then went up to a large tiled bedroom, to enjoy the blessing of a liberal supply of hot water, and to go down again feeling like gentlemen. Dinner would be at seven. Then, let us explore, said we.

St. Lyé was really not on the road, but lay a little to the west of it, a charming, straggling village that evidently grew an arm to meet the road when it came. We were captivated by the little church that looked out over hazy green meadows to soft woods beyond them. We found timbered barns that seemed as old as traceries in the church windows and were probably "born," as I imagined, when Queen Bess reigned in England. We found a wooden porch that ran the whole width of the front of the church, and we found the church doors locked. Why shouldn't we go to the presbytery and ask if we might enter? It was beside the church, built, indeed, out from the south side of it. We went through the gate, through a trim garden, and knocked at the door. An old housekeeper opened it and was sure that M. le curé would be pleased to let us in. She would ask him.

He came. He recognised us: on the road, an hour ago. Certainly he would show us the church himself. And he led us through a side door. It was all restored. Not badly done, but we were sure the main outside walls were eleventh century, and he said they were—but he would explain. The churches of the region had been badly damaged in the religious wars (yes, yes, Villereau, Aschères, Bazoches, and many others), and had lain for centuries in disrepair, the damage increasing of itself because no money could be found for the work. But recently, within the last fifty years, it had been possible, and we had seen some of the results to-day. Here, at St. Lyé, public generosity had been deeply stirred, for the church was beautiful, but the architects found the structure so weakened by time and weather that they were afraid a restoration of the roof would be impossible. But the problem had been solved. The whole of the inner wall was a false wall of brick—he tapped it and it gave out a hollow sound—and by building it the roof was saved. Of course, the church had to be whitewashed—we did not like it? That was necessary, to give harmony, but unfortunate. Plain stone would be so much more dignified. The windows were left plain, and the tracery of a couple of the east windows was new, faithfully copied from the fifteenth century, but new. There was work from many periods in the church, and the restorers had striven to preserve all the original beauty.

Did we know the celebrity of the church? It is the church of Saint Lyé. He led us to a painted wooden figure. This was the saint. A beautiful piece of carving, was it not? One solid block of wood, and hundreds of years old. I shut my eyes to the paint and gilding, and found that it was indeed a good piece of work. We said that it would be better without the paint. He smiled. We thought so? Yes, he thought so too, but we would understand: this decoration, it meant so much to simple eyes. But the saint—his shrine was here in the church. A great saint he was, a great power still. He had lived as a hermit in the Forêt d'Orléans in the fourth century and he came out of the wood to teach the people how to till the ground. Under his guidance they founded the village, a settlement on the margin of the forest all around the edge of the meadow in front of the church. Yes, its back was to the road, for the road did not come for many centuries, and even to-day half the parish was on the far side of the meadow, nearly two kilometres away.

The saint lived a life of holiness, and when he died it was found that he had power to cure the deformities of children. It was widely known, and people had come for centuries past from great distances to pray at the shrine for the cure of their deformed children. They were coming to-day—had we not seen a cripple girl being wheeled down the road? They came, many of them, after all other means had failed. He smiled again, but in the smile there was no judgment of those who were driven to the saint only by despair; there was nothing but patience. I asked if the cures were real. "Quite real," he answered. Of course, there was not always a cure; that depended on the faith, the earnestness of the prayer;

but see, here were the casts of feet, hands, even of the back of a child, all straightened out of their deformity by the power of Saint Lyé. Some people had left there casts of the member before and after cure. He seemed to feel our scepticism without any resentment, but his honest, clear eyes appealed to us not to doubt this.

Suddenly he asked if we would like to see the porch. He unbolted the front door and we went out. It was, he said, a unique porch, for many like it had been demolished. We might see others, but they were rare. It was built for the market of olden times, when the market used to be held in front of the church. The restorers had considered removing it, for the wood was very old, but, happily, they had strengthened it and let it remain. Some day it must go, or be entirely rebuilt.

There was nothing more to show us, he said, but if we cared to come back at eight there would be an interesting lantern lecture on Lourdes. But we, I, felt our tremendous distance from these people to whom simple things were events, and I knew that we would be very bored by a lantern lecture on Lourdes in a country church. We thanked him, but we had walked far and must walk again to-morrow. We thought that we would go to bed early.

There was still one thing, he added, that might interest us; the little château, there, quite close, hidden in the wood. It had a long history and was now owned by a business man. We could not go in, but it was a pleasing thing to look at. We said good evening. I think we both loved the man.

"Well?" I asked, when we were out in the dusk.

"You looked like a true believer," you answered, but there was no mockery in the tone. I am still wondering.

We walked slowly through the dusk. The little château was elegant, but we were not thinking much of châteaux. Mists were gathering over the meadow, and in the night was coming an infinite peacefulness to things. We were part of that night, silent, so calm that some shy thing emerged without fear from each of us, and each saw, knew, in the other, a little of a hidden being.

Boys at the hotel were drinking light beer. More boys were coming in. Girls came, passed through to inner rooms and talked gaily with other girls. They were all going to the lecture on Lourdes and wanted us to go. But we were glad to go to bed. Boys and girls in the morning were all talking about the lecture on Lourdes—it had been good.

Boys and girls are lucky when they find life so simple.

The curé, I think, reigns now in the village of Saint Lyé, in the forgotten land of Orléanais.

VI

THE HUNTING WOODS OF ORLEANS

A HALF DAY's march to Orléans, and the afternoon in town! An early start in the cool morning. Bread and sardines in our packs. The canettes, useful objects carefully preserved and now full of red wine, also in our packs, for we have at last done something about lunch. Up the road we go, and into the Forest of Orléans. The forest is old, but the trees are young and Spring is not yet here, but brambles and little plants of the ground are early to celebrate its coming, and the tardy poplars and oaks will soon rob them of the sun.

The forest is full of undergrowth, almost impassable, but through it are open lanes, wide alleys, long and straight, crossing and converging, for this is a land of pleasure, a forest maintained for the chase, and abounding in game. Eagerly we look for game, and see one quail. Game lies deeper in the forest. We know that there are also clearings in the forest, and lonely villages, very old, but they are withdrawn, shy, and we find no road, no path to betray them.

We are half way through the forest sitting by the roadside. A Citroën waggon stops beside us and we hear Henry's voice. He is taking the bees to the Spanish border and he will take us too if we like. "No? Well, there's a good tea shop in Orléans; street leading from the *gare* to Joan of Arc's statue." And he is off again.

We also move on. Another car overtakes us. The owner invites us to ride, but we decline. It is our purpose to walk every step of the road. But in declining, we didn't know that we were rejecting the only such offer that would be made the whole way across France.

We emerge from the Forest. Near where a railway crosses the road we select a grassy place to sit down. We eat our bread and sardines and we find that two canettes of wine are too much. You don't like wine—yet. Some children pass down the road and before we have finished they pass back again. It is still the forenoon—we will be early in Orléans. And here on the grass, in the shade, it is good to idle a little longer, not talking; dreaming of what we have done, are doing, will do. We take our boots off.

That was a fine morning, wasn't it? Almost a wonderful morning.

The hill is long through the forest after St. Lyé, but the descent to Orléans and the Loire is more rapid, shorter. We were going down, and were seeing new things, little orchards, little vineyards, and the houses were closer and closer together every minute. Soon we came to the pavé surface, the tramlines, and the houses closed in along both sides of the road. We were in the outskirts of Orléans. We made our way to the right, along a wide ring-boulevard, came to the gare, turned left, and there below was Joan of Arc's statue, and there on the left was the tea-shop.

We installed ourselves in the Café-Bar du Centre and prepared to explore the city. It was two o'clock. We hastened. Orléans spreads like a fan, sloping up from the river. Down to the river we went, and at the first sight of the suburb on the far side I had a flash of recognition—it was like New Orleans! For the far shore is flat, the Loire is wide, and the sun was very bright. There was just enough resemblance to make me pleased, but the city behind was like no other city I have seen, which is not saying that it was at all wonderful.

The Loire is wide, and was not the river we had imagined. It was like meeting with a person of whom we had heard many times, to find him utterly different from what we had expected. The Loire is broad, brown, shallow, swift, the channel divided by long, flat shoals of sand, the far bank scoured by the waters of past floods. The three long bridges were like other bridges we were to see (though not on this journey) on the Loire—just bridges. The sloping quays with their big iron mooring-rings were like an esplanade along the city front, but there were no barges. I had expected French rivers all to resemble the Seine, though I knew the Rhône for something different.

All over the dusty city we walked, looking for the walls and finding that it no longer has walls. We stopped before many churches and other buildings, but none was interesting enough to persuade us to enter. Far more interesting to us were the shops, for we had not seen city shops for a long time—nearly four days. The town seemed very busy, and was full of soldiers, officers and men in blue uniforms, all going somewhere, but we could not find where any of them went.

We entered the cathedral. We had found its exterior too regular, too pretty; but the simple interior, the surprise of the depressed arches of the nave, were most pleasing. A service was about to begin, and we stayed to observe eight red clerics conduct it in a very perfunctory way. The service meant nothing to them; its repetition was a habit; and they were like boys, inattentive, impatient to get out of school—or they dozed, which was worse. We observed, too, the kind of people who go to church; most of them women, most of them old, but a few old men. People nearing the end of life, drawn to church on a Thursday afternoon.

The tea shop was a joy, the best tea shop in the world—for the time being. With its dainty effect of delicate upholstery and fragile furniture in light colours, its mirrors, its perfect and delicious petits gâteaux coming in batches hot from the kitchen every few minutes; with its neat waitresses and its chic clientèle frankly amused at the appetites and odd clothes of the two unembarrassed foreigners, it was an absorbing entertainment. I was even able to overcome a distaste for ice cream there, because ice cream in such a tea shop could be nothing but delectable. It was there, too, that you outlined a scheme for civilising Texas. We would together set up a business in Dallas, a combined tea shop, book shop, and art shop, inducing the pâtissier from this one to enlist under our banner. We thought it might live for a year before a certain big hotel in Dallas would ruin the business by corrupting and stealing our pâtissier.

There was also a bath in Orléans, more up-to-date, cleaner than the public baths we knew in Paris. Here they brought us the warm linen in baskets, and we stayed in that bath for a long time. It was on the tree-lined boulevard near the baths, too, that we found a war memorial, in the modern style, a crude winged figure on a slender pedestal. Suddenly I felt that I understood it. There was in the ensemble an aspiration of straight lines and curves, like flame leaping to Heaven. An idea vitalised it. Such beauty exists in a great deal of modern work, but it cannot be met along the old approaches to form. Canova sculptured angels, beautiful angels, but this man sculptured an idea, not the personification of an idea.

At dinner we had to fill in the *fiches*, those little slips of paper that must be filled in for the information of the police, by all travellers who stay at hotels in France. You filled yours in illegibly and it had to be done again (the poor girl had to copy them into a book), and you became a very angry rebel against stupid legislation. They are irritating enough, these fiches, the French ones dating from a law of 1793, but we had to comply everywhere in France and Spain except where the police were lax. Most European countries demand information of the kind from travellers, even England.

Dining at the hotel were certain fair ladies who smiled at us hopefully in spite of our clothes, for foreigners are profitable, usually. And at one table were some shabby-looking men whom you heard say that they were walking to Spain. I resented them, for nobody else had any right to be walking to Spain, and I hoped that they were not going our way.

We were early to bed, but not to sleep. The streets were crowded until after eleven o'clock, and the shuffling, leisurely footsteps and gay voices of the people were somehow good to hear. It seemed that everybody in Orléans was out enjoying an easy promenade. And through the night I heard a bell, the most beautiful bell I have ever heard, a strong, deep note that filled the air with a ringing ecstasy, a slow swelling and dying of bronze pulses that entered my veins like life, and I felt the music of the universe drawn into a single note, retreating at last, vanishing, like a call sent into the emptiness of nothing, slowly dying into a stronger silence than the night. I have heard many sweeter bells, many more brazen, but in no other bell have I felt such ecstatic power.

In the morning a fine rain hung in the air.

We got lost among wet hedges by the railway near St. Jean-le-Blanc, before we found our road out of Orléans, and we made it an excuse to admire the seven towers of the city behind us. Then followed a long, oblique walk across the flat valley of the Loire, here a rich, green land, five miles wide, at once the valley of the Loire and the Loiret, the latter quite a small stream that gathers the brooks of the flood-plain.

The Loire is a strange river. For a long distance it runs close to and parallel with the Rhône, but the opposite way. It then makes a great bend, and on the summit of the bend, where it is closest to Paris and the Seine, stands Orléans. Held within the limb of the bend on the south are the great hunting forests of France, not a continuous forest like the Forêt d'Orléans, but, rather, a whole collection of large woods dotted over the sandy countryside. In them are châteaux, and lodges, and the famous meeting towns like la Ferté-St. Aubin and la Motte-Beuvron. Henry tried to persuade us to take the main road that leads through them, to see a famous inn at la Motte-Beuvron that has sheltered the most celebrated men in France, but this was not inducement enough to lead us away from our road through the woods, a lonely road that is not marked in red on the map.

The valley floor was like a continuous farm of many crops, vegetables, grain and fruit. Houses and villages thronged in this populous land. The misty air was clearing and away to the southeast we could see St. Cyr-en-Val, newly washed and glittering, one of a string of villages along the foot of the low hills. When we got there we agreed that St. Cyr-en-Val was the nicest village we had seen in France, for it was clean, neat, the houses all in good repair, and many of them looked new. There were hawthorn and fruit trees beginning to bloom (odd that the hawthorn was earlier near Fontainebleau), and with its well tended little gardens the place was radiant. It seemed that there was vitality in this region of Orléans, a land of fruitfulness.

Beyond St. Cyr the tidy white road ran through glades and pinewoods, winding over gentle, park-like hills. At one halt you found your toes were rubbing, and the emergency kit came in for its first use. Every time, this day, we sat on a pile of stones by the road for our spell. Loiret believes in good roads.

Near a little place called la Bergère we met the sow. A huge, pink, lean, obstinate, grunting sow. Two old men and an old woman, wrinkled peasants bent by labour, had a light cart below the bank of the road, and, like a bridge from the road to the cart, was a crate. The sow was supposed to walk into the crate, but she declined to play. In her eyes it was a ridiculous game to please people whom she had no desire to please. In vain they pushed and shoved and panted. In vain the old woman held out a tempting turnip. The sow had no intention of being put into the crate and taken away in the cart. We threw down our packs and joined the struggle. The sow made for the yard of the house nearby, and the cart had to be moved. We stalked the sow, outflanked her, forced her to the very opening of the crate, but with a grunt of "No!" she would toss her snout, turn, and escape. Eventually we got her toes committed to captivity. But she planted them in a gap between the boards, and bent and arched and twisted and squealed in resistance as we manœuvred her stern. Inch by inch she was inserted into the crate, partly forced, partly cajoled, and the door was made fast. But the crate had to be lifted on to the cart. It was like pall-bearing at a ridiculous funeral, but it was done, and nobody gave any credit to the horse for his patience. The coffin might have dropped and the corpse escaped, had the horse not been quite indifferent to it all.

Then the old people woke up to the fact that we were there. Thanks, introductions, and shyness ensued, but they were firm on one thing; we must come in and drink a *cannon* with them. The little room was terribly poor and dirty, with a tumbled bed on one side, the coverings faded and worn. The cannon (merely a bottle of wine) was produced, sour, white wine, and we were expected to drink tumblers full of it. I asked if it were vin du pays and they said that it came from close by—was it not good? It was all very embarrassing, and we soon said good-bye.

At Marcilly-en-Villette we had a simple lunch at a restaurant—omelette, bread, wine, and for you, milk. Oh, that milk! I had to ask for it, but they would never supply it until it had been explained, and you resented any explanation. How these people wondered—a person drinking milk for déjeuner! One drinks *wine*, not milk. Marcilly was a dead little place. There was a large grassy square in which stood a war memorial, but the amorous poultry had the square, and the village, it seemed, to themselves.

Beyond Marcilly the land is the same for miles; pine and glade and clearing, and three long, low ridges between the little streams, the Cosson and its brooks. They were like Atlantic rollers, those three hills, and we could see the road before us, rising and falling, straight for a mile. At one place we saw some quail; at another, a hen that had been killed by an automobile, her feathers scattered over the road; at another a gendarme and his wife cutting and bundling wood. There are few people in these sandy pinelands, and the wood industries are primitive. Wood is cut for timber and fuel, it seems, but the great pine exploitation, like that of resin in the Landes, is not here.

Late evening brought us to an open place, and we walked into a village that had the spirit of St. Cyr-en-Val. You had been talking of lighting fires and cooking food in the open (I think the complete scheme involved stealing poultry) when we came to this lovely little place, Sennely. There were fruit trees in bloom, and flowers, and a soft brilliance in the evening light. Sennely lies in a shallow depression and has given itself plenty of room. We walked right through it to the far side of the little town, and there found a quiet country inn, pleasant as any in England, and the price of a room was six francs. It was named after a horse of an impossible colour; the Blue Horse, or the Green Horse, but I have forgotten. They had peculiar brass petrol lamps there, like tiny watering cans, and in the dining room was an assortment of interesting brassware, andirons and chafing dishes, and other implements we have forgotten how to use in these days. Dinner was good, and we went up to a neat, feminine room, where lace abounded.

Opening the windows, we looked across the quiet landscape in the early evening. A faint smell suggesting cherry blossom floated in. Spring had come.

VII

SPIRITS, GOOD AND EVIL

It was time for us to be getting temperamental. In Paris we had surmised that by the third day we would be walking along the road three kilometres apart, hating one another. But here were six days passed in perfect accord. My temper had been short the morning we crawled out of the haystack, but the annoyance was against myself and was soon over. I never stay angry with myself for long. But we had touched a height at St. Lyé, and we are both prone to reaction. Thunder was already muttering on the horizon, and a host of spirits was about us, but we were deaf, blind, for many hours yet.

We were leaving Sennely, and a little over a kilometre south we passed from Loiret into the department of Loir-et-Cher. We came to a moated château by the level road, and found it pleasant to watch the weeds in the clear water, for the old building itself had little interest for the eyes. Near Souvigny, a long, narrow village, was a row of neat, new cottages erected by the commune, each with a small sign over the door announcing the fire insurance company with which it was insured. These notices were general in France and Spain, and "L'Abeille," it seemed, does most business in France. The houses interested us, too, because new houses are rare in French villages, but in this region below Orléans people seemed to be wanting new houses. Were people increasing in number, or were outsiders invading the land?

At Chaon we found a church with a great wooden market porch bigger than the one at St. Lyé, the only other one we were to see. A sign on a road to the west indicated "la Motte-Beuvron, 13 kilometres," so we were still in the hunting country, were to be, indeed, for the rest of the day, but it was beginning to feel different, flatter, opener.

A kilometre past Chaon we crossed the little river Beuvron, and entered the department of Cher. There was nothing interesting until we came to a canal, the Canal de la Sauldre, narrow, quiet, lined with trees, the tow-path well worn. We were leaning over the bridge, when I dropped the map—into the water. You sped around and down, retrieved it cleverly, and returned it to me with a smile. I felt that I should not have dropped the map; that you felt I should not have dropped the map. . . .

Beyond the canal was another road to la Motte-Beuvron (would we *never* escape from the most celebrated men of France?) and where our road crosses it is le Coudray, the place where we had agreed to buy lunch. But le Coudray consisted only of two cottages and an ugly red brick château. We would try the château.

They were not "in residence," the shutters were all closed, but in a cottage at the back we found retainers preparing very good food. The retainers were astonished, saw no reason why they should be expected to sell us food, and said with asperity that if we wanted to *buy* food we could easily do so at Pierrefitte, six kilometres further on. We were frankly in a bad temper. We had explained ourselves politely, had produced all our best credentials, had implied the unusual nature of the request, and were prepared to have it refused; but we were not prepared for people who took the attitude of giving us a lesson. So we trespassed through their private woods to regain the road.

Now, Pierrefitte-sur-Sauldre I have forgotten. I have forgotten where we crossed the irregular boundary of Cher out into Loir-et-Cher again; forgotten the river called the Grande Sauldre, and the three brooks we must also have crossed; forgotten the railway by the road; and Souesmes; and of crossing back into Cher again below Souesmes. One of these irregularly shaped departments uses cylindrical kilometre stones, Loir-et-Cher, I think, but I have forgotten that. I know, from our little account book that we paid 18 Fcs. for lunch at a restaurant at Pierrefitte, which was altogether too much, but where was that restaurant, what did we eat for lunch, and what is Pierrefitte like? I estimate that twenty-one kilometres of the road of that day have just dropped out of my memory—a serious loss, for on this journey I could not afford to lose twenty-one kilometres of road more than once. I should have read the signs at the time—that something was threatening—but I did not.

Life started again near a place called les Tannières on a brook named the Naon. We were supposed to spend the night there, but it was only a small mill of some kind, and we would thus have to go six kilometres further on, to Nançay. But from les Tannières, life was vivid.

We noticed that the pines were different, curving their branches more openly to the sky, showing purple and brown colours in their scaly bark. We saw yellow broom in flower, and noticed much heath land. I recall a great oak standing in a large field, aloof as an Englishman in France. And the forest smells were less resinous, more earthy.

Then the rain caught us.

We hurried aside, through a fence, to a handy shelter made of poles and rushes beside the little river Sise, a place where the women came to wash clothes, but far from any house. We sat in there a long time, and somebody's nose bled—I think it was yours, so it was probably mine. Anyway, something bled, and there was a dabbing of handkerchiefs in the little river.

When the rain was over and we started walking again there was a wonderful light, a kind of inner brilliance of the air itself, that seemed to float horizontally between the trees, depriving the world of shadows. We were highly sensitive to it, and thought we were in an exceptionally good mood.

But I was haunted.

We were talking very little, and spirits from the past were crowding about me, harassing me. First came THE COLONEL, pushing his way to the front, stalking about like an emu. "I see," he said, "you are keeping a good pace; march for fifty minutes and rest for ten. Admirable. But you are not punctual in the mornings, and you're very lax about the interval you allow for lunch—an hour, two hours; very lax. And you don't reconnoitre, so you have to march on to Nançay. Your dress too needs attention, more smartness. And should I have to remind you that an *officer* shaves every morning, not every other morning? Why didn't your friend salute?"

I turned my back on the colonel, only to find THE PROFESSOR confronting me. "Oh, Aurousseau," he said, apologetically, "we really did expect that you would observe things more carefully. Since the Fontanebleau Limestone you've given us no information at all. It's really very important, you know, very important. For instance, was it the Tertiary or the Archæan you passed over last Thursday?"

"Oh, Professor," I complained, "please don't ask me to worry about those things now. I'll send you a copy of the Geological Map of France, a nice, coloured one."

The professor was reasonable. "Thank you, Aurousseau," he said, "that will be very useful, very useful indeed. Er, could you send two? It would be very good of you."

He bowed a stiff little bow and withdrew. But no sooner had he gone than A VALKYRIE came whirring down from the sky. I had better introduce her.

Two days before I left Sydney I passed the evening at the house of some friends where I met, for the first time, a young woman, a poetess, who interested me greatly. We talked of many things, and she insisted, enigmatically, that she was coming to France with me. When I went on board the ship I found, in my cabin, her photo, and a letter, the most delightful and fanciful letter I have ever received, truly an exquisite letter. She (her photo) was coming with me, said the letter, and some day we would come back. I have never replied, for I cannot reach the whimsical, elfin spirit in her that prompted such a letter, and it is to that spirit only that I would speak. But truly, she has come with me. She swoops like a bright bird into my remotest moods, and, like a glint of light, she is gone.

She was beside me now, on the road, rebuking me. I should never have made this journey with you, she said, but with her, for we would have seen together, in dark pools of the forest, mirrors of a world where shy fauns of the woodland flit across the shadows. The forest creatures would have come to us. We would have heard the voices of tiny flowers—and much more to the same effect. I could tell, from the falsely romantic tone, that the young woman was not quite herself in the rôle of an apparition. Glancing at you I told her "No!" She was violently angry, and cried out to the others, "Let us all desert him!"—you were putting your watch in your pocket, and you said that it was time for a spell.

Children, returning in dog carts from school, smiled at us and raised their hats politely. A cycling virgin passed and did not smile, but we said bon soir to him. That rain had done us good, the air was so clean after it, and we thought we were very satisfied with each other.

We walked on, a long way, and it was nearly dark. Nançay was never around the next bend, it seemed, but at last we saw a spire over the trees. After dark we entered the village and went to the first inn we saw. They said they had no room, and sent us over to the Hôtel de l'Ecu opposite. The maid there said she would inquire, and returned quickly to say there was no room. It seemed peculiar for the two hotels of lonely Nançay to be full, so we asked for Monsieur. Madame came, only to repeat the same information, that there were absolutely no rooms.

We went to the Mairie. The mayor kept us waiting for some time and then interviewed us in the presence of another person. He was a small, brown, wiry little man of about fifty, the mayor, and he listened to our case attentively. Yes, he said, this was a matter that required very careful consideration. Of course, we had papers? Yes, we had cartes d'identité, and passports. The mayor was shaken out of his judicial frame of mind into real interest. "What," he asked briskly, "have you passports? Let me see them."

He examined them with great curiosity; the other man examined them. That was the King of England on that stamp; that was the emblem of the United States of America on that one; and that was an endorsement for a visa. They had never seen passports before, and now they had two, one British and one American, a real entertainment. They spent a quarter of an hour studying them.

"About the hotel, M. le Maire?"

Ah, yes. The hotel. There *were* rooms, of course, but the people were like that. If the men were absent the women hesitated about accepting strangers. We would go around there and see—it would be all right.

But the mayor was not disposed to move yet. He asked questions, became conversational, volunteered information. The country, he said, was in a bad way. This hunting was the trouble, killing the farms, making farming not worth while. Not that there was much game; deer, chevreuil, partridges—all small game. There were a few sheep in the district, not many, for farming was going down. And the forests too, they were being cut and there was no replanting. That was very bad. The commune was large, fifteen kilometres across, a big thing to manage. . . . You began to break into exasperation in English, and had to be reminded that we were asking a service, asking for help. Luckily the mayor was enjoying himself too much to notice, and at last he moved.

We all went to the hotel, passing through the bar into an inner room. A big, flabby boy of a man rose to meet us, grinning stupidly, making a poor best of the situation. Rooms were not mentioned, for the mayor himself had deposited us in the hotel. As there are forms of politeness in France, I ordered wine, the whole party talked and drank, and we found that in Nançay the host himself is expected to fill all the glasses. It was very formal, and I wanted to laugh. Without hurry, the mayor and his insignificant shadow departed, and we were served dinner in this family room. I received a little illumination when I found that Madame was nursing a sick child—not very sick, but cross and trying—and I realised that it was long past bedtime for these people, which, however, was their own fault. We had arrived at Nançay at seven-thirty, and it was now long after ten. We had exceeded the distance we had intended to go, and were soon asleep in a plain bedroom.

In the morning we collected our belongings, which Monsieur had scattered by hanging them on pegs in several rooms, and we paid a bigger bill than was quite just.

"It's no good," you said, "if they don't get us in one way they get us in another."

But perhaps, I thought, the colonel was right; hotels can be "reconnoitred," in guide books for motorists.

From Nançay it is not far to Neuvy-sur-Barangeon, but the latter is not as interesting as the map suggests. It is on the way between many places, and is the meeting point of nine roads. Among nine ways one may be forgiven a little hesitation. We were uncertain of our road and had to be directed by the blacksmith. Soon after leaving Neuvy we found ourselves in the shallow valley of the Barangeon, on a very uninteresting stretch of road, a railway beside it, and there was a threat of rain in the air. We sat down to rest opposite an unprepossessing château, one of those bleak buildings that seem to be the modern French ideal of domestic architecture. The place was a bad choice. The building was mournful, but if we looked the other way there was the railway line, and a railway line sends us quickly into despair.

We were glum, taciturn. We were getting on each other's nerves.

For days, irritation had been trying us. There had been Etréchy, the gendarmes, the lack of hospitality of the Gâtinais, the fiches at Orléans, your sore feet, that milk at Marcilly, le Coudray, Pierrefitte, the unsatisfactory luncheon system, Nançay, where I had rebuked you openly, the rain; and fatigue, for we were now feeling the effect of continuous walking. In many of these things there had been gentle friction between us, felt in spite of the will, the effort, to ignore it. And something subtle must have happened at Pierrefitte, some unconscious, mutual attempt to hurt, else why should we *both* have dropped Pierrefitte so completely from our remembrance? We were in a condition to quarrel about nothing, and that, by unspoken consent, we were both determined to avoid.

When it was time to move you suggested something. At the bath at Orléans we had changed clothing. Soon we must change again. Why not have a washing day? We crossed the line, and went over fences, through a young thicket, to the river. It was pleasanter by the river, but the banks were soft and we had each to make a kind of beaver dam. Socks, handkerchiefs, and underwear were washed and hung out on bushes to dry, but before they were finished the rain came down. We were very polite to each other when it was necessary to speak, and decided to tie the wet things in handkerchiefs and make for Vouzeron. For the rest of that day we had wet, white bundles bumping and swinging on our packs behind.

By the time we got to Vouzeron we were very wet and we went into a restaurant where we were able to spread our things before a stove to dry. We were served a good lunch by an exceedingly handsome girl whose features recalled to me the women of Arles and Avignon, and the question of milk came up again. Moreover, you said that the girl was not very handsome. We paid for lunch, a reasonable bill, and, as the rain had ceased, we set out again, noticing nothing in Vouzeron.

Our road from here left the valley for the higher ground, and we went over grassy hills and dales. We walked on in silence. Near Chaumoux some girls came to the door of a new dance hall, a kind of roadhouse away from the village. They watched us curiously, boldly, in open ridicule, one of them whistling a strain of suggestive music that annoys me still, whenever I remember it. Our spell was due, but we passed on, not resting until we were concealed from their view by a hedge and a fold of the hill. We said nothing then, and I hypnotised myself by looking into drops of water that were still clinging to the dandelion leaves. Further on we met a woman driving a small flock of sheep in a very pretty hollow of the hills. A swarm of midges hovered about the sheep and caused us to hasten past them, but for a short distance a few of these pestiferous little insects attached themselves to us, as though determined to make us lose our tempers.

At the next spell our mood had improved somewhat. It was Sunday, and people dressed in their best clothes were walking out from Mehun to Allouis, a pretty village not far to the east, between our road and the next one over the hill. The people, family parties coming from church, greeted us pleasantly, asking stupid questions, such as "Are you having a rest?" We didn't approve of those people at all.

But the country had changed remarkably, from pineland to moist pasture land, with rows of poplars and pollard osiers. I think I forgot you for a time there, caring not whether you talked or were silent. I talked, but I was talking to myself. I was in my native land of Berry at last, the land of my forefathers, and down the road, two miles away, were the roofs and towers of Mehun-sur-Yèvre, their last resting place.

VIII

MY NATIVE LAND OF BERRY

WHERE are the limits of this land of Berry? I do not know, even to-day, and I do not wish to know. Should I see the land of Berry marked precisely on a map it would lose the dreamy mystery that it has in my mind. All I know is that it spreads out from the town of Bourges, and Bourges is the very centre of France, therefore Berry must be the heart of France.

I used to wonder about this land whence my grandfather came. I could *see* Grandpa, quite a real old man, indulgent, understanding little boys perfectly. He took me to the very first moving pictures ever shown in Sydney. They were shown in the afternoon, and Grandpa wore a top hat and a frock coat. I could touch him, he was real, but around him there was romance that made him different from any other grandpa, for he came from Bourges, a long time ago, in the 1850's, when he was a young man, and he came in a sailing ship from Bordeaux. I used to wish that Bourges had a prettier name—it was such an ugly word to look at—but at last I found Berry, a wholly satisfying name.

Grandma came from England, but so did everybody's grandma in Sydney, and there was nothing in that. But Grandpa came from ever so far away in France, where they couldn't understand English. To that there was something different, almost of distinction. It was a little hard when the boys at school made up rude rhymes about my name and asked me what frogs tasted like (those were the days when the British Empire felt very confident and superior and was taking three years to fight the Boers; the days before King Edward made it respectable to be French), but a secret pride kept my head high, for none of them had such a thing as a French grandpa. And I liked to think of the land of Berry as a country of the legendary past, a land of castles and knights and ladies, of powerful dukes and brave deeds; the kind of land whence old stories come. Such a land should be spacious, reaching out into the perils of the marches, not surrounded by a black line on the map at all.

Here I was, then, this Sunday afternoon, in Berry. How far did it extend? Away to the north-east was a long, flat mountain, wooded, and strangely cleft at the southern end. It must have lain between us and the Loire near Sancerre, and we had watched it for hours that afternoon. Berry, I thought, could not go beyond that mountain, but it was a broad, spacious country, a country of low hills and many little rivers with marshy valley bottoms, a land of rich pastures. A satisfactory land to claim as my own, after two generations of exile.

When my battalion came from Egypt to France, Francisco congratulated me because I had had the good sense, as he put it, to pick ancestors who came from such a lovely country as France then seemed. I have often said to you that my ancestors came from this country, adding that the best thing they ever did was "to come from it." But I don't think I really meant that. Secretly, I agreed with Francisco.

Mehun, we found, has light blue houses, castle towers, and a great stone gate with a town clock in it, and according to this clock we got to Mehun at half-past five. It must have been a tiny, walled town, but the walls, except the stone arch of the clock, are gone, and the town has spread, out along the hill roads, down to the valley, and across the river to the railway. Even the Mairie is in the new town, for we passed it on the way.

We went to the best hotel, the Charles VII, because it was the only one, and were allotted a room with only one bed. Off came the dangling bundles from our packs and the linen was spread out to dry. Then we went out, for there was an hour or so of daylight left and a new place to see.

Now, I have reason to thank your sincerity here. You were deeply interested in this town because it was *my* town, and you were prepared to talk, did talk, waiving disagreement, though not removing it, for that was possible only by joint effort. But we were so far able to forget it that we spent an evening that has no reproach in its remembrance.

We went up the cobbled street of Joan of Arc to the church, on which inscriptions from the Revolution still show. It is a curious, dignified old church of the eleventh or twelfth century, and it stands on a frowning little height, looking over a canal, out between old houses to the marsh. Within, it is austere and has a semicircle of round columns and rough round arches behind the altar, that give it a claim to solemn beauty. On the north wall is a gay picture of St. Joan of Arc before the front of the church on her visit to the town, and the castle in the background of the picture is an imposing, aristocratic structure in which Roman solidity married Gothic grace. On the south side is a chapel with fifteenth century tracery and offensive glass. We went out by the south door, past the statue of St. Joan, to the castle of the picture, now a ruin of two lofty, round towers and many walls, on a low bluff. There you seemed happy, clambering over the walls and rocks, absorbed in the exploration of your second castle, finding curious openings in the walls, even finding a dungeon.

On the way back to the hotel there was a crowded little dance hall behind a shop on the main street, full of young people dancing to quick music, making the best of Sunday afternoon. We paused there and looked in, half inclined to join the company.

The Charles VII is an old hotel with crazy stairways and draughty deserts of waste space. Our room opened off a kind of upstairs court surrounded by bedrooms. Our window, narrow and low, gave a view of a restful old house of stone in a quiet garden behind stone walls, the kind of house where everything is too mellow for anything to happen; where peace has a value above adventure, and contentment is too deep to suffer change. A scholar might have lived there and been happy. Through the window came the sound of women's voices, close, almost beside us, and we saw later, from below, that our window was only half a window, the other half belonging to the next room.

The dining room was prepared for a feast. There were three long tables ready for at least forty guests, the white napkins folded into the wine glasses to spread like fans, but we were the only guests who came. A girl, who had those pretty features that mark absence of character, served us with dinner and brought purple wine that formed puce bubbles as it poured; quite a pleasant wine, but most interesting for its colour. Through a slight accident of movement more of that wine was spilt than is usual in pouring, and it made a large birthmark, an ugly patch on the table cloth. You detest clumsiness, and that disagreeable patch brought us both back to the mood of the day, and our efforts to keep the evening as it had been became conscious, became a strain.

That night we faced the situation and we both said some hard things. But the open expression of our anger removed it, and a truce was declared. The anger, the tension of the day, vanished completely, but there remained a hurt that was not anger, but which allowed, at the time, only a truce. By the morning that too was gone, and without any words we both understood and accepted a complete peace. It was well, and I have recalled this trying day because it held in it the power to bring our whole adventure to nothing—was the real test of our ability to carry the plan to completion. Had you abandoned the trip at that early stage, so, too, would I have done, for it is one thing to be at cross purposes with a companion, but quite another thing to be without him. I have striven here to analyse the train of little influences that brought us close to disaster, because I have wanted to understand something that seemed to be without reason. But of what passed in my mind that night I will not tell, nor will I try to guess what passed in yours. Our private meditations brought us to the mutual understanding that there was peace and that it would last. We could not, therefore, have been far apart in thought or feeling. And what more is it necessary to know?

In the morning I had affairs of an ambassadorial nature in

Mehun, and I wondered about the state of Marco Polo's raiment by the time he arrived in China. The ambassador from Australia presented himself in heavy, dirty boots, old grey flannel trousers, a khaki shirt open at the neck and covered by a woollen sweater that had pulled badly, a grey waterproof overcoat bought in Washington three years before, and an old, greenish grey cap. But he was shaved. The American attaché appeared in old black boots, old grey knee breeches, woollen stockings, a chocolate and blue flannel shirt open at the neck, and covered by a chocolate and blue sweater that had maintained its shape, a rather heavy brownish woollen overcoat, and a grey cap. He too was shaved, and he looked like a schoolboy.

The ambassador and suite, unannounced, were warmly received by the mayor and civic officials of Mehun-sur-Yèvre at the Mairie, at about ten o'clock in the morning. The mayor was clad in becoming harmony with the dress of the diplomatic party.

The mayor was a jovial, fat man, and his name was Rousseau. He remembered well my tall great-uncle and my short grandfather, for the latter had made a voyage back to France in 1893, and he said that they called them "the long and the short of it" in Mehun. I was told that the person I sought was still living and was given his address and directions for finding it. Records and archives were consulted with surprising speed, and information given.

We set off, then, for the Manufacture Pillivuyt, a pottery, to find M. Jean Vilmard. We went across the canal, where there is a picturesque mill built out over the water; across the river, and towards the railway, fearfully passing by the Gendarmerie Nationale. At the gates of the pottery the concierge asked our business, and he proved to be another of the old residents who remembered the family—*le grand capitaine des pompiers*, he called my great-uncle, the tall fire-brigade captain—and he found M. Jean Vilmard for us.

This great-uncle, the last survivor of the family in France, died in 1908. He was a professional soldier all his life, and on retirement from his military service he was retained on the reserve list, as commander of the firefighters of Mehun. He was a bachelor, and in his best years he had interested himself in the education of young men. M. Jean Vilmard was a protégé to whom he was most attached, and with the Vilmards he spent his last years. When my grandfather died in 1898 my father continued the regular monthly letters to Uncle, and we thus came to know much of the Vilmards. In his last years Uncle's eyes failed, and his letters were dictated to M. Vilmard, Uncle signing with a scrawl that became less and less legible, a pathetic contrast with his former handwriting. After his death the correspondence was maintained with the Vilmards, but it became less frequent (nobody in Mehun could read English, and my father cannot write French) until it ceased when the War broke out. M. Vilmard was of military age, and we feared that he had been killed.

But here he was himself, coming towards us, a dark, genial man in the prime of life, rather of the gendarme type of physique, but unlike a gendarme as could be. Many expressions of wonder and pleasure accompanied the introductions, and I had to explain twice that I was not my father. We walked through the pottery plant, past a house that M. Vilmard said was the residence of the owners' representative, and learnt that the Pillivuyts, the owners of the pottery, are the absentee aristocracy of Mehun, and that the pottery *is* Mehun.

We were taken to M. Vilmard's home. I have spent about four years in France altogether, and during that time this is the only French home in which I have ever been entertained. I have been in many Belgian homes, Swiss homes, and have not been considered a dangerous person to have in the house in Denmark and Holland, but in France the private home is practically inaccessible.

Madame Vilmard was exactly the same as in photos of twenty years before, but Adrienne, their only child, whom my mind had not permitted to grow up, was a young matron of twenty-three, in bed with her first child, a baby boy a fortnight old. We were allowed to admire that baby and to talk with Adrienne, and we found the joy of that household altogether beautiful.

White wine and cake were produced and the questions and sentimental reminiscences began. We were told how Adrienne used to guide Uncle through the streets of Mehun, and how the two were inseparable. I was asked for a report on the progress of each member of the family in Australia. Old photographs were brought out, and I was betrayed to you in my boyhood and girlish youth, dressed up to have my photo taken and very conscious of it. A delightful and terrible morning it was, for me. And for you? You sat patiently, munching cake, and seemed to be getting some fun out of it all.

We had allotted only a morning to Mehun, and I wanted to find the holy sepulchre. M. Vilmard could not leave his work to take us there, but from his directions we found it easily, a plain French grave with the usual iron cross, the inscription on an enamel plaque, and, to render everything complete on the standards of French mediocrity, a *couronne*, one of those detestable wreaths made of black, white, and purple beads strung on wire. It was rusty and out of shape, and I had great satisfaction in throwing it on the rubbish heap. I copied the inscription of my great-grandfather and great-uncle, both of whom lived to be eighty-three.

Of this great-grandfather we know little, but I found the laconic inscription informing. He was born three years before Sydney came into existence, and was a boy at the time of the Revolution. As a young man in the middle twenties he served under Napoleon, and a cannon ball took off his foot at Wagram. He must have held rank, for we have his epaulettes at home, handsome articles of dress, made of fine gold thread, and untarnished to this day. He received the medal of St. Helena, and we have it too, and its "papers of legalisation." He married late, I believe, and I wonder if that foot had anything to do with it, or was it as hard to make a place in the world after those wars as it is now? But of his occupation in Bourges I know nothing. Grandpa came to Australia as a crystalliser, and I like to think, therefore, that great-Grandpa did mysterious things with sugar. But I do not know, and took no pains to find out.

We found also in that cemetery the grandiose tombs of many Pillivuyts. But for me, the grave touched my romance of Grandpa with reality. He did come from France, and here was a label on the land of Berry that proved our origin. Satisfied with the morning, we returned to the Charles VII for lunch, and made ready to go to Bourges.

Now, ten months later I was at Mehun and Bourges again. My parents were on their first, and what will probably be their only, journey abroad, away from Australia. I took them to the land of Berry. We learnt that the railway station of Mehun is the sleepiest in France, and we learnt that the old house and the dining room of the Charles VII scorn change. We lunched at the Charles VII, and the tables were still ready for the forty guests who never come, and again, we were the only guests who did come. . . . . The same waitress with the wavy brown hair, thin nose, delicate rose paint and powder, and mobile *Sitzfleisch*, served us with purple wine with the same polite lack of interest. The stuffed owls and hawk, the stag's head, the enlarged views of Mehun, and the fretwork clock were all in their places. The black piano was open, with open music on the rack. I went to the piano expectantly, but the music was not the same. I turned and looked at the room again, to realise that the positions of the tables had been altered. And, weren't the wine glasses red, when you and I were there? This time they were plain. But these things have left the room as it was: a room that says "I will wait and wait, and some day there will be a banquet, and it will find me ready, if I am not disturbed." This room is the meaning of the notice one sees on many French hotels: "Grande Salle pour Noces."

I took my parents to the church. Now, whenever I took them to a church in France there was a funeral, and there was one about to begin here, so we went to the castle. Towers always incite my mother to climb (the castle was destroyed by the local mob during the Revolution, but the eastern tower, you will remember, has been restored), so I went and got the key from such a pretty girl—I'm glad you didn't meet her or we would have been delayed in Mehun. We went up into round room above round room, finding two rooms completely furnished in period, making a stone castle seem quite cosy and habitable. The upper rooms are a museum, containing things that can be seen in any respectable museum even in America, from Neolithic flints to Louis Quartorze snuff boxes. The tower was worth the climb, because away to the east we could see the cathedral of Bourges, like a stout ship on the ocean, and the light over the land was the light of Berry.

From the castle we went to the pottery, but this time we were expected, and great was the ceremony of honour—a British afternoon tea! And I think, I *think*, that it caused mild astonishment for me to appear in a proper suit with a white collar. Madame Vilmard greeted us in the familiar singing voice, and we met again

Monsieur Jacques Bricourt, now a young man ten months of age, full of bright intelligence and most winning. He is being brought up by his grandparents, for Adrienne was expecting another child, and she lives far away to the west; and, such are the conditions in France now, that she has to supplement the family budget as an embroiderer. But she comes once a fortnight to see Jacques. We were shown a photograph of her husband, and a handsome boy he seems to be. Well, the visitors made their suitable offerings to small Jacques, as Australian godparents, and, that over, the family history was attacked as before. This time, however, we heard of great-grandmother, who had been Marguerite Jouhanneau of Vierzon, fifteen kilometres north-west of Mehun, and thus also of Berry. Her *timbale*, a great, solid silver wedding cup, the plaything of baby Adrienne when she was good, was presented to my father as an heirloom. It subsequently caused him to stand in fear of every Customs official in Europe, now that most countries are collecting gold and silver. I was given two of Uncle's medals. We were shown articles of furniture he had bequeathed to the Vilmards, and we discovered something of the strength of the mutual bonds between them and him. M. Vilmard has also inherited Uncle's seat on the town council of Mehun.

Unexpectedly, my disposal of the wreath recoiled on me. We had been to the cemetery before going into the town, because it is close to the railway station. As soon as the grave was mentioned M. Vilmard asked me anxiously if the wreath was there on my last visit. He had missed it and feared that it had been stolen. I made a poor explanation, I am afraid, but when somebody spoke of flowers they told us of the French Day of Remembrance, All Saints' Day, when floral processions are formed, and all France goes to her cemeteries, and not even the oldest grave is neglected.

We have, at home, fine china from the Mehun pottery, brought to Sydney by Grandpa. My mother, who understands china, wanted to see this pottery, and we were conducted over it. Any sort of order can be executed, from simple bedroom utensils to large, intricate, ornamental pieces. We saw the crockery of the Messageries Maritimes steamers in the making; young apprentices at work putting blue lines on plates; artists doing excellent decorative work by hand; and the museum of choice exhibits. For the finer commissions English clay is used, French clay, they say, being too refractory to handle for the most delicate work, though more resistant for articles of common use. And indeed we still have dishes at home that seem to have the durability of Pyrex glass. Mehun china can be abused in the kitchen range and survive the trial.

But it was nightfall, and we had to catch the Paris train at Vierzon.

And the meaning of all that is? That many things may be seen in quite a small town, if people are willing to stay more than half a day. But it is just this desire to stay in places that prevents most people from ever getting to Spain. You and I have been waiting at the Charles VII, about to continue a journey to Spain. When I put my pack on it felt strange, like a harness, as if I had been days without it. Mehun had finished, it seems, the first stage of the journey—some of it had become the past. So we turned towards Bourges, along the tow-path of the canal, and I think we went with a different, an experienced spirit. Was it not so?

To walk along a tow-path means that there will be no hills, and in France it also means that there will be a row, two rows of prim trees, regular as a palisade, all the way. We were glad there would be no hills, glad also that it was only sixteen kilometres to Bourges.

We found, not far from Mehun, an old and extensive château with a large private chapel, in which we were greatly interested. The grounds were in disorder, the woods overgrown with brambles, and the shutters of the building were all closed. It seemed to be deserted, but we heard a couple of dogs among the outbuildings. The chapel was open and had long ago ceased to be a chapel. It was much older than the Renaissance château, and may have been built as early as the fifteenth century, but the rude simplicity of the style made it hard to read. On the inside walls were traces of fresco painting, and there had been a little carving to relieve the severity of plainness. But in the eastern and northern walls arches had been removed to make way for wooden barn doors, and the chapel had become a combined barn and stable. It was all in a ruinous condition; the tiled roof subsiding, the walls cracked, the plaster mouldering, and the old barn door shaky.

The château itself had not been painted for many years, and some of the upper windows were broken. A home deserted, far too large ever to be inhabited again, a reminder of the times when France decided to do without an aristocracy; without a class instinctively fine in mind and ways; a class that had bred into its long generations all the best characteristics of a nation and had jealously preserved them. But France decided to become a paradise of mediocrity, for it seems to me that the preponderant middle class in France to-day, that of the business and professional people, has expanded from something that was very small at the time of the Revolution—the bourgeoisie. Nobles and intellectuals have come down into this class, peasants and labourers have risen into it, and everybody is, oh, ever so much more comfortable, and nobody cares much about the costly, finer values of life. But how carefully France is preserving her old beauty that has ceased to have a meaning in the life of everyday! And, with her, most of Europe is becoming a museum that exhibits with pathetic pride what Europe once was.

Half way to Bourges are two villages on opposite sides of the valley of the Yèvre, Berry-Bouy, and Marmagne. At the latter is another, smaller château with round corner turrets, inhabited, one that we thought we would like to inhabit ourselves, and I voiced an absurd scheme of getting rich and coming back to Berry to live in a château and restore a lost glory to the land (you may interpret that as you like!). At Marmagne too, there are interesting bridges worked by counterpoise, that span the channels of a little "port," and in the little port was a barge being laden with casks of wine by slow, heavy labour. We rested there and watched it.

Along the tow-path, walking, or on bicycles, were many children returning from school, healthy little Frenchmen with no use for châteaux. Along the canal came a string of narrow barges, the kind that penetrate the narrow-gauge canals into the remotest little towns in France, moving always a slow commerce of considerable volume, spreading evenly the wealth of a great country where nobody is very wealthy. In the last of the barges were two women, reclining in the stern. One of them was the most beautiful girl we were to see in the whole of France, and she smiled at us the customary greeting, not everywhere observed, of persons on the road. I leave it to you to describe her—you do that sort of thing better than I can; it is a matter you analyse more deeply.

Beyond Marmagne the massive cathedral of Bourges came into view, like a great sphinx gazing out over the land. And, as if to reveal to us the soul of its beauty, it conjured a magnificent storm out of the heavens. We sheltered, we walked on, and we tried to shelter again, but there was little shelter along the tow-path. The storm passed over and away from us, and became a splendour of grey cloud and cold brilliance. Evening stole into the air and the sun shone. The torn clouds gathered into soft, curling masses, delicacy and brightness lifted them higher into the sky, the clear sun tinged them lightest pink of rose, luminous, the gleam of pale gold on their edges, and the cathedral sharpened into dull metal before them, a burnished rock in the centre of the world. It stood above the level of the land with indomitable fixity, seeming to proclaim itself stronger, more splendid than the storm.

We moved on, closer and closer to Bourges, and gradually the great front, the roof, the towers, sank below the trees. It seemed that the cathedral drew itself away, hid from us the immensity that it spreads into the world, that we might better know the immensity within it, that can hold the world.

We passed under the railway, where there is a kink in the line of the canal, and a basin that serves as the port of a small factory. Ten months later I looked for this place from the train, and found it, the only part of that day I have touched again. We came to a large flour mill, and to a garden café not yet prepared for the summer crowds, and presently we felt ourselves within the influence of the life of Bourges. Workmen were riding out from town on bicycles; a man here or there was fishing; an occasional boy and girl passed, arm in arm, and it got nearly dark.

We came to buildings, a road beside the tow path, barges moored to the bank; and unexpectedly we were stopped by the gendarmes. They hopped off their bicycles brusquely, demanded our papers, and with no waste of time or politeness found out our business and intentions, and as brusquely rode off. They were like an earthquake in that quiet evening.

The basins, canals, river, railway lines, and streets under repair, at the curious, inland barge-port of Bourges, were uninteresting after fresh fields, and the place was muddy. We went to the Plough Inn, and were told that we had better go up into town for a room as it was "only faubourg here." Up into the maze of the old hill town we climbed, and a crowded town it was, and we could see no reason why an ordinary Monday night should bring so many people into the streets. We saw the Hôtel d'Angleterre, but it looked exclusive and frightened us. We turned into what seemed to be a main street, with the intention of asking for advice, and picked as our mark a young lieutenant. He not only told us where to go, but took us there, to the Café-Bar de l'Hôtel de Ville, where he introduced us to everybody and we became a source of entertainment. We sat down and ordered apéritifs, and the lieutenant and a young civilian told us about Bourges and the region. The civilian had been reading the *Dépêche du Berry*, the local newspaper, and both he and the officer were proud of their local origin, calling themselves *Berrichons*. I broke the secret, and was hailed as a Berrichon too, and was exhibited to the house, but the patron did not seem to be deeply impressed. We were able to withdraw gracefully from that pleasant company, and went to our rooms. We had two rooms on slightly different levels, and had to pass through another room to get to them. Our windows overlooked the town barracks, which were built when beauty had not to strive to appear in French architecture.

In the dining room was a parrot, and an old woman knitting. Regular customers dined there, reasonably and well, and we were so far familiar with the house as to be able to borrow brushes and rags to clean our boots.

That night we went to the cathedral, which was close at hand. We found that an impressive service for men was being performed. There were rows upon rows of silent men listening intently to a sermon. The lights were dim, conquered, it seemed, by the vast obscurity, and the cathedral seemed to have gathered into itself the whole eternal void. But we wanted the cathedral to ourselves, and did not stay.

Back at the hotel I began a long letter to my father, which helped, I believe, with other things, to induce him to come eventually to Europe.

The next morning was a triumph. We went again to the cathedral, and discovered the glass of the lower windows of the apse, glass that is one of the marvels of the whole world. It is glass of the end of the twelfth century, unequalled anywhere but at Chartres. We found too that the fourteenth century glass of the clerestory windows would seem peerless if alone, and that the fifteenth century windows of the aisle are so bad that the eyes shun them.

And we explored the cathedral as I had never explored a building before. I have played the muezzin on old minarets, and have been above the groined roofing of the cathedral at Wells, but here we went everywhere. The round-faced verger in the little black cap found the man whose business it is to watch the stones of Bourges. This man took us through locked doors of the tower, into the bell tower, around the outside parapets of the towers where there are no railings. We walked on a narrow stone ledge under the flying buttresses, on a level with the tops of the pinnacles, finding strange irregularities in their alignment, and went all around the eaves of the cathedral, around the edge of the colossal roof of Bourges. Below us was the sloping roof of the aisles, and we were able to touch the rough, corroded and crusted outer surface of the incomparable glass, to appreciate its thickness, the way in which it is mounted, and to note here and there a bright piece of new glass in the old mosaic. We went through passages in the wall, to find ourselves in the lofty, lower triforium, suspended over the space of the nave, and we made the complete inside tour of the cathedral on this dizzy level. You wanted to seize the cords that held the dusty hats of two dead cardinals from the roof, and swing backwards and forwards over space, making me recoil into agoraphobia.

When the man who looks for crumbling stone had taken us to all the forbidden places, we went alone to the top of the northern tower and looked over the red roofs of Bourges. There was a funeral entering the empty square below. The town was pleasantly fresh, and had surprising little courts and gardens behind the houses and, from the colour of the roofs, we could easily tell the old hill-town from the new, modern town. It is a dignified, substantial place, viewed from up there, all Berry sending little streams towards it to join the Yèvre.

Bourges, held in the great bend of the Loire, is a retired spot, and has thus come to be one of the arsenals of France, a town surrounded by barracks and hospitals and the workshops of armament. It has an artillery range many kilometres long, on the east, where guns are tested, and is a place of national importance. But to walk around Bourges is to see none of these things, for they are on the fringes of the town, away from the beauty that brings peaceful tourists there from far places. To go to Bourges, moreover, is to meet ancient Rome in Gaul. It was an important town in Roman times, and our map showed ancient Roman ways leading to it from all directions, one of them still called the *Levée de Jules César*. The museums of the town are full of Roman antiquities that have been gathered in Berry, and under the mass of the cathedral itself are parts of the Roman town wall; and little Roman chapels of the fourth and sixth centuries lie deep under the high altar of to-day.

Now, this cathedral of Bourges is unique. It has five great western doors; it has no transepts; it has two triforia; its outward sloping columns give an easy carriage to its grace; and the flood of light over all makes it one of the grandest of cathedrals. One gets blasé over cathedrals—and pictures. When one has attained to Rembrandt, Sir Joshua Reynolds and Romney become small fry, and Corot fades when Daubigny's clearer depth is discovered. They say that Titian ousts Paul Veronese and company, but I do not yet understand Titian. And so it is with cathedrals; one comes to tick them off: Amiens for proportion, Salisbury for perfect unity, Chartres for glass, &c. An ugly phase of mental indigestion.

But Bourges drew me back into an appreciation of things as a whole. It reminded me that it is useless to seek perfection, except in one thing at a time, in different things at different times, but that there is such a thing as the highest level of complex attainment, an interweaving of things that are just near, just at, or just past their highest possible development. This, I think, is what they mean by balance. And Bourges has it. It has little to do with unity, or with time, but is, rather, a level that may be maintained for a longer or shorter time at different places. At Bourges it was maintained for a long time. But there is also a perfection of attainment of which material things are only the outward projection. The architectural genius, like that of painting, may be shallow or profound, and at Bourges it was profound beyond the pretty music of Chartres. It has created, at Bourges, a deep, serene strength, the spirit the cathedral revealed to us in the storm, the power that it holds over its surroundings; and it has created, within this very spirit, an inverse infinity, for the building encloses, enwraps creation itself, in a manner altogether baffling. To me, the spirit of Bourges has an exterior and an interior, two opposite senses that lead both into space that is beyond thought. I say "to me," and I say all this with the same reserve.

And Bourges led me to an appreciation of glass, because it showed me the best I had seen. I have seen King's College in Cambridge, Bath Abbey, and York Minster, and I used to think that stained glass was the product of a technique that has been lost, until one day, in a little parish church in England, where I could touch the windows, I found that there is no such thing as a technique of stained glass, any more than there is a simple technique of painting. A painter studies composition, drawing, colour, light, and other things, that differ in their technique of representation. And with stained glass there are the production of glass, the combination of colours, design, drawing, the painting of glass, the mounting of glass, and doubtless other things. The lost technique is that of the production of glass. But the other important elements in the making of windows did not reach their highest development together, and, unfortunately, the first-named was the first to decline. The little strips of lead can be made to enter the scheme of the design or drawing, by sinking into the shadows, contributing to them, and by emphasising the bolder lines, or they may destroy the whole, by proclaiming that they are merely a net of crooked little bands of lead over the window. As the various branches of technique attained their highest levels of development at different times, windows of great merit have been produced at different times. There is exquisite design in Florence, both in the cathedral and at Santa Croce, but the colours are the all-too-pure colours that appear in chemical solutions in the laboratory, beautifully clear, but lacking fire. The painting and mounting of the windows of St. Gervais and St. Sévérin in Paris, and the design too, of sixteenth and seventeenth century windows in Antwerp are wonderful, but the colours are the modest colours of simple garden flowers. The modern windows of Tewkesbury are quite worthy to stand in the same building as the splendidly radiant, fourteenth century, east windows, but here again it is colour, and the combination of colours; yet, in these astounding modern windows there is depth, though not richness, and there is drawing that outstrips design. At Fribourg in Switzerland there are modern windows of great brilliance, though the colour is thin, but in them drawing has attained an incredible freedom. I recall a group of windows at Canterbury in which the transition of colour from one side to the other marks a great achievement, but the same thing was done at Chartres long before, with perfect colours. You and I had to go to Toledo to learn what brown and certain purples can be, in glass. Always, therefore, it is colour, and Toledo shows that it is also colours; but the subordinate matters of blending and design, drawing, and mounting, also make for perfection. Therefore, I say, there is not a perfect window in the world. The all-important element of colour reached its height and fell rapidly, before the other elements of technique had been developed. Design is better in fourteenth century than in twelfth century windows in France (there seems to have been a lag of about a century in these things in England, where everything was about a hundred years later); design and glass-painting were strongly affected by the Renaissance; but drawing is a modern development in stained glass. Therefore, a "balanced" window seems to me impossible.

At Bourges and Chartres the late twelfth century windows represent the greatest achievement of this art, and the wave touched England at Canterbury. They have no Toledo brown, but they have so much else, and their blue and scarlet alone are enough for the mind. They base themselves on geometrical design, so that the imperfections of drawing and mounting do the least possible harm, but their rich confusion dazzles one to everything else but their superb colour-spendour. To see Chartres does not detract from Bourges, for they are, so to speak, the same windows, like molten oriental rugs, but at Chartres the whole cathedral has them, while at Bourges they are confined to the eastern end.

Some day I will take you to Chartres blindfolded, and blind you with their beauty. It cannot be described, for it is the glory of God revealed in the sunlight, if that means anything these days, when the glory of God is come to be a figure of speech. And those thick, uneven lumps of glass play with the light like gems, and the glory changes mysteriously in power and beauty as the sun passes across the sky. No man has ever looked on them twice and seen the same wonder. But I should have referred you to the qualified writers, who use technical expressions, for all this. I have never consulted them and am doubtless quite wrong; yet I would never make a present of a text-book of botany to a child who loves flowers.

I think we were on the top of the cathedral when I went on this excursion. We came down, to find the fat verger, "the Swiss" as they call him, in a strange Empire costume with a red cocked hat, and the funeral service was in full swing. It was conducted, chanted, in a monotonous, impersonal way by functionaries who had probably never spoken to the deceased, and was pathetic enough. We hurried out.

We went and found a bootshop and at last you bought strong black boots. We got also a tin of "Diane," an evil-smelling mixture of animal fat, said to render boots impermeable and everlasting. Then to lunch.

In the afternoon we were real tourists, looking for the sights of Bourges. We found the house of Jacques Cœur, where there was a guide so irritating that the house is not pleasant to remember, but I think we will agree that Jacques himself was a fine fellow, and he justified the romances I used to make up about Berry. I think he flourished (it is the right word) in the sixteenth century, as a kind of French Lord Byron, but gifted with common sense, which is only saying the same thing, of course. He left Bourges as a young man to go to the East, where he embraced the caliph and the Koran and wore a turban and a scimitar (see statue). After a long time he appeared in Bourges again one day, in plain clothes and fabulously rich. He settled down in Bourges and became, in this inland town, one of Europe's powerful shipping magnates, owner of a fleet that sailed on all the known seas, and controller of an enormous commerce. Naturally he built a big house, and expressed himself in its decoration. The wooden ceiling of the guard room is in the form of an inverted hull, and is not beautiful. The stone carvings, in border and shield and boss, are not from the traditional themes, but incorporate the trees and plants of the Orient, and there are many rows of *coquilles St. Jacques* and little hearts, side by side, which are the rebus, the heraldic pun on his name—Jacques Cœur. It seems that Jacques let the Koran fall overboard on his homeward voyage, because he had a proper Christian chapel built in the house in Bourges, and used to attend service in it himself. His motto runs around the walls of the chapel in quaint old French characters of red and gold: "A vaillans cœurs riens inpossible." He must have been quite an honest person, for the King of France made him Treasurer of the Realm, and under his control the finances of the kingdom became very healthy. I believe that he had only one wife, and died a respectable death in bed at home, but, were I writing a story about him, I would arrange both these things better than he did. The great stone house is empty now, a show place, inhabited only by the wicked guide, so we departed and went to the Château l'Allemant, which is much better.

This château is right in the middle of Bourges, like an ordinary house where people live. It was built by a family of German weavers who came to Bourges, and who also "flourished," at the time of Jacques Cœur. He and they lived in the town without quarrelling, and even went so far as to co-operate in the scheme of its defence. Sentries on the watch towers of the weavers were always in visual communication with the yeomen on the towers of Jacques Cœur's palace, not spying on each other, but watching for the common enemy. The little château is a gem, one of the best examples, they say, of early Renaissance in France. These Germans did the job properly, bringing workmen and importing stone from Italy. The bas-relief decorations are exquisite, and there are many curiosities of construction, inside and outside, all very sensible measures for soundness. The cour d'honneur is embellished with a series of unglazed terra cotta medallions of Roman emperors, in the Florentine style, but the rains of 400 years have beaten sadly on the noses of Augustus and his forerunners. What became of the German weavers is not stated, but the château still has an atmosphere of life, because it is *used*, the kitchen as a fish hatchery, the larger rooms as the library and headquarters of the Archæological Society of Berry, and the loggia as a museum of Roman antiquities, where Roman milestones may be seen. And a very pleasant custodian, wise in the care of baby fish, lives in the basement. It is altogether a nicer place than the gloomy Gothic palace of Jacques Cœur.

We looked through Bourges for other things that would not be museums, and found some mediæval houses in good preservation, and several not unattractive churches, but we were most satisfied with the tea shop. It was not to be compared with the tea shop in Orléans, but the tea and the cakes were good, and the young women were charming. They explained a window full of chocolate fish as "Valentine fish," analogous, we supposed, to Easter eggs. But these things are irrational to an Australian, like the beefeaters in the Tower of London. Moreover, a large chocolate fish filled with other sweetmeats and tied with ribbon, looks hopelessly indigestible, and is but a caricature of a real slimy fish that can be fried. I earnestly hope that my great-grandfather was not a maker of Valentine fish.

That night we decided to walk in the town and mingle with the crowd. But this inexplicable place was deserted as Marcilly-en-Villette. We could see no reason why an ordinary Tuesday night should be so different from an ordinary Monday night, but this night Bourges was dead.

Now ten months later, when I went to Bourges with my parents, there were differences. We stayed at the Hôtel d'Angleterre, and I felt superior to so modest a hostelry as the Café-Bar de l'Hôtel de Ville, but I looked at it privately with friendly approval and I hope it understood me. I decided that a mental attitude is closely connected with one's purse, even in such small things as the choice of modest hotels. But the sanitary arrangements of the d'Angleterre were *not* those of the Café-Bar. The d'Angleterre is plain and comfortable, with an excellent cuisine, and the office staff speaks English! And there was a real general in the dining room. How those soldiers swarm at Bourges!

The new post office, a building of unexpected merit that harmonises well with the dignity of Bourges, was open, and the temporary wooden hut where we posted cards to Pauline and Ruth had disappeared. Where else did we see a fine, new post office in France? I have forgotten.

I took my parents, of course, to the cathedral, and was remembered by the fat verger in the round black cap, who made it indeed a pretext to sell my father several albums of large views of the cathedral. These albums are a series of six, careful and discriminating photographic studies by an Armenian priest who is now attached there. We saw the crypt, and the ancient chapels in the foundations, and were told that the excellence of the original sandstone, a stone that does not absorb moisture, is the reason why there has been so little restoration at Bourges. The crypt, the views, the irresistible power of the windows, made me feel the uselessness of trying to know such a building. What, for instance, do you and I know of the detail of the west front? We know that it is a noble ensemble, but of its parts—nothing. Fortunately, the spirit of such a place is in the whole, but how, too, it pervades the tiniest details I was able to examine on this second visit!

We climbed the tower, and again the light of Berry was over the world, in grey rain mists pierced here and there by the sun; gravely vivid, in a sombre freshness and depth of view. Do you remember the little-bell turret over the winding stairs on this tower? On each side of the exit, outside, there is a vertical string of large, black Chinese or Japanese characters that I do not remember when you and I were there. They have the decision, in their rough execution, that could be given only by a person who knew what he was doing. They pursue me, these black, Chinese characters on the top of the tower of Bourges cathedral. What possible meaning can they have?

It may be only coincidence, but I saw too, this second time, one of those little yellow men, possibly Japanese, who so aroused our curiosity in Madrid and Valladolid after this journey was ended. We used to see them standing patiently at street corners, or bearing gibes with quiet dignity in cafés, exposing strings of imitation pearls for sale. Each of them had a handbag, was very unobtrusive, and seemed never to sell anything. It was a member of this band of small, yellow salesmen that I saw in Bourges, behaving just like his brothers in Madrid, and I wondered again about what they were really doing. Were they actually trying to sell strings of imitation pearls that nobody wants, or were they there for more obscure reasons? The little yellow man at Bourges had probably never seen the writing on the turret, and probably would not be able to read it, but my mind associates him with it; and this is the dangerous, irrational way in which minds work. A crazy mob would not hesitate to hang that inoffensive little yellow man on the top of the tower, just because there is unexplained Oriental writing on the tower. Don't we hate the things we don't understand?

I took Mama and Pappa not to the house of Jacques Cœur, because there is a wicked guide there, but to the Château l'Allemant, where there is a nice custodian in a green uniform, who is fair, has very blue eyes, wide jaws, and a smile. He had no fish or eggs in the Gothic kitchen. The only fish were some old ones in a cement pool in the yard, and old fish are no good at all. But he had, in the top rooms of the château, a new museum, exhibits of the work of contemporary Berrichon artists, and of the rural industries of Berry. We found that the nice, blue-eyed custodian was an excellent and persuasive salesman, and he too remembered that you and I had been there ten months before. Who could easily forget those curious costumes of ours? Well, the waitress of the Charles VII in Mehun, for one, but girls like her don't remember anything for long.

Mama and Pappa and I departed from the Hôtel d'Angleterre in a motor vehicle, and from Bourges in a train, like sensible travellers, and we had to tip an extraordinary number of people for the privilege of doing so—which is customary, as Mark Twain discovered.

On Wednesday, the last morning in March, you and I left Bourges by a long, straight, country road, well satisfied with the little city. Nothing happened on that road for a long time. Your boots were comfortable, we were glad to be walking again, and we felt ready for forty kilometres a day, though we were not to go quite so far that day. We passed over pleasant green hills, among hedges and pastures, and Bourges was quickly lost to view.

By half-past ten we came to a village called Trouy, which is not on the road but stands a little aside. The tracks leading into Trouy were muddy and we were advised not to go into the village, so we bought our lunch at a small shop on the main road. It was a tiny business, but the old lady had wine, and she cut from her own supply the amount of bread we needed. What else we bought I do not remember, but I do remember that it was wrapped in grease paper, and it had to be cut with a knife, so it was probably sausage; and the knife had to be cleaned to peel fruit after it, so we bought apples; and it was all very cheap.

A couple of miles beyond Trouy, where there were low, spreading trees beside the road, and a main road crossed ours at right-angles; where the fields were broad and flat and open, we sat down and ate that lunch by the roadside, and enjoyed it very much. Country girls crossed the fields behind us, going back to work for the afternoon, and a few slow vehicles passed along the road, drowsily.

At the village of Arçay, which is also aside from the road, we noticed a modernised château, and concluded that the addition of glazed-in balconies and a tower that looked like an observatory were not happy additions to the architecture of an earlier century.

Shortly after here this fine day clouded over quickly, and a light shower overtook us. We sheltered in one of those queer stone cubby-houses that are found beside the roads here and there, and the purpose of which remains unknown to us, for we never had the curiosity to ask about them, nor ever remembered them when we were asking about things. They are just big enough to hold two persons sitting, if they squeeze, and may perhaps be used as shelters for roadmenders' tools, though we never found any tools in them. Here we greased our boots with Diane, urged to do so by the rain, no doubt.

The rain passed quickly, the sun came out, and the day seemed to deny that it had been anything but sunny. We entered a pine wood, and the descending road, which is marked straight on the map, skirted a small, open bowl in the forest, almost making an "S." We looked here for a village called St. Lunaise, and found only a small café. Two women were sitting by the roadside and one of them got up as I swerved towards the door of the café. She seemed expectant of making a handsome sale, at least a couple of bottles of beer, and was clearly disappointed when I asked only for a packet of cigarettes.

Now, this matter of cigarettes was always causing me trouble. I found the ordinary grades of French cigarettes not to my taste, but the cost of English or American ones was prohibitive. By perseverance I had, in Paris, accustomed myself so well to Gauloises jaunes as to find them more satisfying than my older favourites. They are made in the State factories, from what they call Maryland tobacco. There are three grades of Gauloises, in yellow (*jaune*), blue (*bleu* or *gris*), and pink (*rose*) packets, but the jaunes, the superior grade, were unobtainable in lonely places, and the others I found to be unsmokeable. My supply sometimes ran out, and it is necessary to smoke a cigarette at each ten minutes halt. There is an entry in our account book, made at Orléans, "cigarettes for

4 days," but I find, from the book, that I bought more, two days later. The least perfect of all our arrangements, this one of tobacco, but luckily, in so far as tobacco is concerned, you are virtuous, and I suffered alone. The woman at St. Lunaise, however, was a good woman, for she stocked Gauloises jaunes, and I was able to proceed. Had it been otherwise—who knows? Would I have travelled the rest of the road? Tobacco is so important.

St. Lunaise made good its claim to being a village by exhibiting to us a tiny post office around the lower hook of the "S," but the road continued through a wood, the Forêt de Soudrin, that gradually changed from a shady pine wood to an open one of scrubby young oaks, hardly a wood at all. We went up and down over dry hills, and at last saw the church of Châteauneuf-sur-Cher.

This church is large and modern, but not without the merit of good proportion, though every line is, or looks, machine-made. It seemed interesting enough to enter, and we found inside several women arranging flowers for the Easter services. The interesting thing, however, was to find the walls almost covered with small marble tablets inscribed with gilt letters, acknowledging thanks to saints, particularly to the Blessed Virgin, for such things as recovery from illness, happy marriage, the birth of children, the settlement of disagreements, unexpected good fortune, and so on. Tablets of this kind are common in French churches—in the Latin Quarter in Paris they record thanks for success in university examinations—but nowhere have I seen the walls covered with them as they were in this modern church. They were as numerous as the little silver sacred hearts in Italian churches. This church overlooks the valley of the Cher. On a wooded hill north of it a very large château, more like a castle, dominates the town of Châteauneuf-sur-Cher. It is the *château neuf* from which the town is named.

The town is cut across in several places by dry or shallow channels of the Cher, a "braided" river, like most of the main streams of the region. It was here that we first found an addition to the many labels that are pinned on to France. On the end pillars of the bridge over the main channel of the river its name is announced in bold letters, LE CHER. It would have been a most uninteresting town were it not undergoing repair. Great public works were in progress, the streets were being paved and improved, footpaths of cement had been laid down, kerbing and guttering was being done and done well. We walked around that ugly town in astonishment, for we had seen nothing like this enterprise anywhere in France. It resembled an American "development" on a small scale, but it will not succeed in making the place any the less unattractive—except to those who see the beauty of life mainly in such things as kerbing and guttering, and great, I fear, is their number.

We found an hotel that had a very large café with billiard tables. Madame was sewing and was not in a hurry, but she discussed the terms in advance, and gave us a plain but clean room, comfortable and newly painted, overlooking the street. We had done only twenty-five kilometres and it was early, half-past four. We were not tired. Oh, such a bright afternoon, why not swim?

We crossed the river and took the road through Venesmes, a village that is a satellite rather than a suburb of Châteauneuf, but so much under the influence of the town that it too was being neatly kerbed and guttered. I began to wonder if France was germinating a Municipal Renaissance at Châteauneuf-sur-Cher.

The Cher is a broad, swift, brown stream with pebbly banks, and is close to the hills on the west side of the valley here, but is really flowing in two channels around a long, flat island above the town. We climbed down a bank and found a secluded place among green thickets, with trees on the far side of the river. We undressed for the swim.

It was freezingly cold, the pebbles were hard and the gravel sharp, and one walked by surprise into holes in the channel and wet by surprise ever so much more of himself than he had intended at the moment. The bank of sand that promised convenience was a kind of quicksand, so we had to be content with bruising pebbles. I felt myself contracting and shrinking like the mercury of a thermometer plunged into cracked ice, but we did the soaping and rubbing and rinsing in Spartan fashion. The soap had a way of escaping gaily in the current and it collected grit. But we found that a brown stream cleans as well as a clear one, and we felt such a tingle of warmth after a rub-down that I was in no haste to put my clothes on.

There were some men working not far upstream, and the poplars and osiers, even those overhanging the water on the far bank, had been neatly trimmed, their lower boughs lopped, for a tree, in France, represents firewood, and the lopping of boughs is a regular part of the year's routine in the country. It changes the slim trees, like poplars, into bare, straight poles with crowns disproportionately small, but it forces the trees to put out slender branches of just the kind required, and it makes a landscape look very formal.

Going back, we found three friendly donkeys in a field by the river, and they held us in conversation for ten minutes or so and tried to follow us when we left them. I don't think you liked the little beasts as well as I did.

At the hotel we drank beer, and watched four youths playing billiards. They were rough, decent types, using bad language as though it were the only way in which they could express themselves, but the frequent and loud use of immodest words and expressions caused neither concern nor embarrassment to the women of the hotel who served them with drinks. But the out-and-out "swear word" in French is far less indelicate than the *double entendre* that can be insinuated into the meaning of the most innocent of ordinary words. So many French words have two kinds of meanings!

Dinner introduced us to new customs. Hitherto, we had dined alone, at small tables in café-restaurants open to the public. But here there was a dining room in a separate building at the back, with one long table on which were many bottles of wine, one to every two persons. There was a regular meal hour, and about a dozen men and women assembled, all well-dressed people, business people, it seemed. None but acquaintances conversed, and the atmosphere was full of restraint. One woman made a lot of noise with her husband and the staff over a telephone call she was expecting and which was at last announced, to the relief of everybody. The feature of the meal was a *pissenlit* (dandelion) salad, very bitter, very refreshing to the palate. But nowhere else have I sat at so formal and silent a meal in a French hotel or restaurant.

We sat in the café for a while, and went to bed early, for tomorrow, your boots having behaved astonishingly well, we were to start our stages of forty kilometres—twenty-five miles a day.

I had passed out of the land of Berry—where? I think where the pines gave place to oaks in the Forêt de Soudrin. We were in a land where the customs were different from what we had known. I had bathed in the great Cher, which flows down to unite with the Yèvre at Vierzon, and which has given its name to the old land of Berry. In the department of Cher I do not know where Berry begins or ends, exactly, but I knew, at Châteauneuf, that this native land was behind me, and that it was a land both of splendour and romance.

Nor did I know, until I had left it, that not until I *had* left it was I really a free vagabond on the way to Spain, to a future that had nothing to do with the past, except the common past of man.

IX

COUNTRY WAYS AND PROVINCIALISM

FORTY KILOMETRES a day, and every day henceforth! It really had an effect on us, for we were away on the road at half-past eight, and the earlier start was not a mere burst of enthusiasm, for it became part of our routine in France, after leaving Châteauneuf, except on those few days when the march was short.

We passed through Venesmes of yesterday, and at the end of an hour were at St. Symphorien, a little village high above a small brook that flows to the Cher, a village that is not kerbed and guttered. We spoke to an old man in the fields here, and he replied in patois, though quite intelligibly. He was the first person we had met who did not speak "French"—for *deux* he said *doui*, and he twisted the sounds of many words in the same fashion. He stands in my mind as a kind of sentinel before the hilly country that lay south of him. For, once past him, we began to climb up and down hills that got steeper and closer the further south we went.

This country, too, was different in ways that I can only describe as more rural. There were no such things as trees planted in rows along the roadsides; it became a real country road for us. Nor were there many villages. It was a region of scattered houses and small farms, a really populous countryside, with here and there a small market town too big to be called a village. And, compared with the France we had seen, there were many more side roads and winding lanes, and there were hedges. Our second halt was among fine hedges that bordered pastures. In a corner of a field there we found large stone drinking troughs for the animals, and I think you found some wild violets—or were they buttercups?

We were to spend two days in this rolling, grassy country, and the more we saw of it the more countrified it seemed, for the people too were different, shy, stupid, yet inquisitive, looking with wonder and suspicion upon strangers. At the next village, Chambon, a place on the top of a ridge, we had a good view of this hedged-in land, with its little farms and little woods, where people seem to mix all the known ways of farming, from fruit-culture to poultry-raising.

We rested at a well with a pump just beyond Chambon, and thought that, as we had a camera, this would be a good place to use it, so we photographed each other. While there, a little girl of about twelve passed by, and we said bon jour to her. She looked at us curiously but was too shy to answer, and she passed on up the road. A few minutes later so did we. Presently we saw the little girl a few hundred yards ahead of us, and it seemed that we must overtake her. She looked around now and then, but we soon forgot her in our talk. When we noticed her again we found that we were not overtaking her at all, for the little girl was further ahead than before, and was still looking around. We watched her, and you discovered that she was hurrying, walking as fast as she could—away from us. We slackened our pace, but the road was long and straight to the next corner, and it seemed that she had been sent on a long errand. But still she looked around, and still she hurried, almost ran, and eventually she rushed into a house near the corner. That poor little girl had covered about four kilometres at a breathless pace, to escape from the Bad Men who were coming after her!

The houses at the corner, where we turned to the right on to a main road, are called le Château Gaillard, and we expected to find a château there, not just a couple of cottages, but the name was only the name of the corner café. And so we found, in this remote region, that a name on the map need not stand for a village, nor for anything important.

Not far beyond the corner we came to the Forêt d'Habert, a small forest but a beautiful one, with oaks and ash in full leaf, and the trees were larger, older than is common in France. The forest crowns a broad, swelling hill, and we went down, out of it, then up again, to Morlac, which is on the top of a long ridge, like Chambon.

It was noteworthy, the whole way across this country, that the few real villages are on high ground. There are reasons for such things but the reasons are not to be discovered by walking pleasantly across the land. The people themselves don't know why places like Morlac are perched on the backs of ridges, and the only way to find out is to go and live there, watch the place by night and day, season by season, walk in all directions over the country observing its rocks and soils, its trees and streams, its winds and rains and fogs, and to study the moisture in the ground. I have done this elsewhere, and when the work is finished people admire it, for the explanation is pretty. They say it is very interesting indeed, and there is the end of the matter. It could be the beginning of really important matters but the people who could make them so do not want to be disturbed; they are quite satisfied to be entertained a little, but not too much, and they must have variety.

Morlac was very quiet at noon. In a little store we bought wine, bread, sardines and cake, and when we had it all I had to go back, for there was no key for the sardine tin; and it took Madame, who was short sighted, quite a time to find one, and even then she had to give me one from a private store of keys that had been "saved."

We carried our lunch about a mile past Morlac, first crossing a railway line that skirted the hillside nearly at the top, and then coming to a brook that ran through very green meadows. Along the brook were tall trees. It seemed the very place for a picnic but the meadow was level and damp. We looked carefully for a dry spot, we spread our overcoats on the ground, took off our boots, and ate our lunch in the bright sunlight. It was almost a Summer's day, so warm, and just a little hazy, and a mood of great contentment overcame us. It was quiet there, and it seemed secluded even in the open. There was a mill among trees where the road crossed the brook, and there was a large house among trees further down the brook. A woman in a broad straw hat was digging up pissenlits in the field a long way off, but she took no notice of us. We seemed absolutely private there, as if God had given us a fine day for ourselves. The mood was almost a physical sensation of well-being and peace, and we both found that the best way to enjoy it was to be silent. I lay on my back looking up at the sky for a long time. The shadow of the trees crept over us, and when I moved, to get out in the sun, I found that you had been quietly writing in your note-book!

Like the camera, and the books in our packs, we had found little use for note-books thus far; the days had been too satisfying, and the sleep at night too sound for us to do anything more than enjoy them. But that very green meadow was starred with fresh, white daisies, and to an American and an Australian a field of daisies is an adventure. So, you read me three delicate little prose lyrics you had written in that field, and none of them said quite what you wanted to say, but it was private enough there for you to read them aloud. I think we stayed there two-and-a-half hours, for this—field of daisies? No. This whole day, the mood, was one of the things we had set out to find, and when one finds a thing, two-and-a half hours are little enough time to have it, for one will never have anything quite like it again. But it was a midday mood and the growing shadows covered it. So we prepared to leave it and find other things.

And on the road we found a snake, a wriggly brown snake about a foot along. We played with him on the end of a stick, and talked to him; and he said it was Summer—well, anyway, it was like Summer. We let him go, and he went as fast as he could.

Indeed, it was so like Summer that we had folded our overcoats and were carrying them in our packs, and we felt badly in need of a beer when we got to St. Pierre-des-Bois, which is a town rather than a village. We went into a *bistro* and ordered two bottles of beer that were deliciously cool, and we were in no hurry to finish them. The place felt damp, like a cave, and it had a stone floor. A man and a woman were arguing there about a sewing machine and a bicycle, and were teasing a surly boy who had the bicycle. They seemed to fit in with a mechanised air of the town, for in it were forges, hardware shops, and a display of agricultural implements. We noticed here, and elsewhere in France, that the International Harvester and other Massey Harris implements, Deering mowers, and McCormack implements were the most conspicuous things in imported farm machinery, and were all extensively advertised in the cafés and post offices.

The road and a railway at St. Pierre lie in a little valley which leads up to le Châtelet, quite a town, divided into high town or citadel, and newer, low town in the valley. And here too agricultural implements were displayed for sale.

About an hour's walk beyond le Châtelet the road crosses the brook at right-angles, and we sat down between the stone bridge and a hedge to rest. The brook had the curious name of Portefeuille, but perhaps it is quite just to call a brook "Leaf Carrier." It was so pleasant and sunny here that we took off our boots and socks and waded in childish fashion. And I think, too, that it was here that you broke most alarming news to me by saying :—

"A., I'm going to *grow a beard* on this trip."

It was no use arguing with you. I had weakened any argument of mine already by attempting to grow a moustache. But I felt very sad about you—your complexion was light, almost pale, and your hair so very black; yourself so very hairy without the help of a beard.

The road brought us to an artificial lake that would certainly have made the close acquaintance of our bodies had we not already waded, and had the chill of evening not been creeping into the air. The railway, that had been close beside us from St. Pierre, though not *too* close after le Châtelet, here crossed the road, and a toy train came along to entertain us.

Evening, and the road followed the top of a ridge that seemed to get relatively higher, the country falling more and more below it. At spell time it was nearly dark and we sat on a pile of stones. There were hedges along the road there and birds twittered in them. It was cold. Several cars passed, and we rested, for once I think, overlong. Ahead there seemed to be a wide valley, and far away in it were the lights of a moving train on a main line. Below, closer, were the lights of Châteaumeillant. The feeling of being alone, in the country, vanished. There were lights, of a town, a train, of passing cars; and we were sitting on a pile of stones. These are urban things, belonging to the life where everything is in movement. A cold night, dark, yet deeply blue, like steel. And a town awaiting us.

Descending towards Châteaumeillant we soon came to electric street lamps, the first we had seen in a small town, and the place had the poor, dreary aspect of an industrial faubourg. Groups of young people coming up the hill saluted us with derision, and at the hotel we were told that there were no beds. A low hotel, we decided, and a town with a hard spirit. But we noticed another hotel opposite, more imposing. It had a jovial landlord who had beds, and he made us welcome. We were a little late for dinner, but nobody minded that; and, at a long table like the one at Châteauneuf, half a dozen prosperous-looking men took a great interest in us and wanted to know all about our journey. That was *not* like Châteauneuf, and we told them as much as was discreet, remembering the French gift of inquiring conversation. These men were travelling salesmen, travelling in small cars, and they gave us useful information about the roads. But that dinner was good! The tiny little new potatoes, fried and rolled in parsley, tasted better than any potatoes I remember, and wasn't the comely waitress pleased when I told her so?

After dinner the landlord interviewed us in another room and made out the fiches himself, telling us that the law prescribed it as a landlord's duty. And, as I had doubts of the place I had marked for the next night, we consulted him and he consulted the *Guide Michelin*. He enjoyed this appeal to his local knowledge, and told us that the place I had marked was not a village at all. He recommended us to go to Châtelus-Malvaleix, the same distance, but on an alternative road, and assured us that there would be an hotel, though he could find none mentioned in the Guide.

We went up to bed, ready for it after forty kilometres, though no more than comfortably tired, for the distance was covered very easily. There were three great beds to choose from, all with red covers; there was a large round table with a red cloth; there were vases of dried, ornamental grass on the mantelpiece; and there were red mats on a cold floor. But we soon fell from this illusion of warmth into warm sleep.

The next day was Good Friday, 2nd of April. The town looked garish in the daylight that morning, a raw newness about the straggling edges, and we had to ask an old person for directions to find our way out of it. Once on the road we found a stream of traffic, a slow procession of all sorts of vehicles, making its way towards Châteaumeillant. The people were crowded into their carts, waggons, or vehicles of a more genteel kind, which were nearly all drawn by mules, and they were all dressed in their best clothes, men, women, and children. We said bon jour to them all and a few replied, but they all turned around and stared, stared hard and long, unabashed, and we became angry with this rude scrutiny. The continual approach of more vehicles, too, forced us to reconnoitre longer and more carefully than usual for a place for certain morning ceremonies. It is a land of hedges, but even hedges must be chosen with care.

Four kilometres from Châteaumeillant we left the department of Cher for good and entered the department of Indre. Still the procession came, and then we remembered that it was Good Friday. There was only one person going our way, a pedlar ahead of us, and we felt that we didn't want his company, but luckily he turned down a lane and the road was ours. Urciers we passed, an untidy village on a broad, flat hilltop; and Feusines, which I have forgotten. It was dull country here and remained so for a long way, and by a quarter-past eleven we came to an untidy, dusty, open town called St. Sevère, where the waters of seven unpretentious brooks first become the river Indre.

We will remember St. Sevère.

We had passed by the Gendarmerie Nationale and were looking for a shop where we could buy lunch. There approached us on a bicycle a gendarme wearing light blue breeches, and under his arm was a large loaf of bread. He slowed down when he saw us, drew beside us, and dismounted. We began to produce our papers, expecting the usual examination, but this gendarme was not so easily satisfied. He was a fair, sandy man, with a sandy moustache, rough skin, blue eyes, and a face that narrowed to the chin, a suspicious person, and very sure of his own judgment. Um—papers? Well, we must come to the Gendarmerie; he would examine them there.

We began to argue. The Gendarmerie was away back, making us double our tracks, and we could satisfy any questions he liked to ask on the spot. We had met gendarmes before and we knew the sort of things they wanted to know. Women were coming to the doorways and windows, and the gendarme assumed his sternest tone. We complained that it was utterly unreasonable and unnecessary, but nothing else would satisfy him; to the Gendarmerie we must go. He ordered us peremptorily to march, and on his hip there was a revolver. Clearly, we were guilty of something. But of what? We walked indignantly to the Gendarmerie, trying to look as if we were out for a stroll, ignoring the gendarme behind us completely. Once there, he ordered us into an office and shut the door. He drew himself up to a table, and, with the air of a man who is sure that he will presently expose the whole plot, said:—

"Now, the papers!"

We produced our cartes d'identité. They were examined, but they were not enough.

He demanded our passports, for which he really had no right to ask. I pointed out that the cartes d'identité were our official acceptance and guarantee by the Republic of France, and that it was unnecessary for him to examine our passports. But he insisted loudly that we would show him anything he liked to ask for. He examined every detail of the passports, could not comprehend at all that one should be American and the other Australian, and argued long to have it made clear. He discussed the dates, their validity, the visas, and checked each item of the descriptions of us that appear on them, looking up to verify each entry as I translated it: eyes, brown; nose, straight; height, five feet ten inches (what the devil is that in metres?); and when he had finished he carelessly shoved them aside among other papers on his desk.

Then he asked sternly:—

"How much money have you?"

We told him. I had a couple of hundred francs and a letter of credit; you, I think, had about fifty francs and about fifty dollars in bills.

"Show it to me," he ordered.

This was getting too much and we objected, but he only repeated more impatiently:—

"Show it to me!"

Mine was all right—he'd heard of letters of credit before. But yours had to be explained.

I began to explain it but was told to keep quiet, as it was nothing to do with me. I kept quiet long enough for him to discover that he was without an interpreter. He had never seen American bills before and his interest reminded us of the Mayor of Nançay and the passports. When its value was translated he asked "Is that all you have? What are you going to do when you've spent it?"

So the detail of your private money arrangements, even to your father's occupation, had to be explained in full.

The production of the money had exposed correspondence and other papers in our pocket books. He extended a hand towards your pocket book, a hand from which nothing was going to be withheld; a hand that said plainly: "And I'll have all that, too."

But here our patience ended. We refused.

"Monsieur," I said, "vous n'avez pas aucun droit de toucher notre correspondance.—You've no right whatever to see our letters."

He considered for a moment, realised that there are limits of discretion, and waved the pocket book away as though executing an act of grace, making a generous concession. Then he played his trump card.

"And where," he asked, "are your revolvers? Don't you know that in France it is absolutely forbidden to carry a revolver unless you have a written authorisation from the préfecture? "But," we exclaimed in astonishment, "we have no revolvers!" The gendarme knew better. Who would admit to having a revolver?

"Turn out your packs!" he ordered.

We protested that this was an indignity, but the command was repeated. We turned them out, on the floor. He inspected every article, and asked what it was for, and why it was being carried, and he felt the packs inside and out.

I must do him the justice of saying that he expressed his feelings honestly. He was struck dumb; wonder spread over his face; and he recovered his speech with a burst of astonishment.

"Alors! . . . Ça m'étonne! . . ."—which is best rendered as "Well I'm damned!"—for there were no revolvers.

The gendarme became excited, and expostulated with us. We were fools; we should have revolvers. What would we do if we met bad characters on the roads? We indicated the use of fists, and asserted that there were no bad characters on the roads—there were too many gendarmes. But he maintained that there were many bad characters, very bad; one was always arresting them; people who had committed murders in Paris and were escaping across country on foot. Descriptions of them were circulated to all the police. (Whom did we resemble? I wondered.) We were fools; we should have revolvers!

"And if we had?" I asked.

"I would arrest you," was the simple answer.

"And why," I continued, "instead of first accusing us of having revolvers, did you not ask us to produce an authorisation to carry them? This search was not justified."

But to that he only replied with a profound "Ah."

"And," I proceeded, "may we now have our papers that are lying on your table?"

He watched us put our papers away and bundle our disordered things into our packs, which would only hold them if they were neatly arranged, and when we had finished he said that we were free to go. He became friendly, trying to conciliate us with pleasant conversation, but we had little cause to be pleased with this gendarme who had wasted a good three-quarters of an hour of our time in his ugly little town. He offered us his hand, but without waste of time we departed, boiling with indignation.

This wise gendarme, who looks for revolvers in the bottoms of packs, had made no search of our persons, yet I once carried a small automatic pistol for nearly four years, neatly hidden in a belt pocket of my breeches. I am almost sorry that I did not have it—and an authorisation—at St. Sevère, but it would have spoilt the comedy; and besides, it was confiscated in New Zealand, a highly moral country. He was crafty enough not to risk the fiasco of an unsuccessful search in public, but how he enjoyed showing his authority before the townspeople! I can think of him only as a stupid, rustic fool, over-zealous in the discharge of his duty, and it is my sincere hope that he may some day chance to read this account of the incident.

Women were still at the doors, waiting for us to reappear, preferably in handcuffs, we supposed. We found a shop around a corner, but the news had spread, and they served us insolently, as though we had no right to be in the shop at all. Two persons who were taken to the Gendarmerie must be bad characters. We bought bread, cheese, sausage and wine, and once out of the shop decided, like little boys, to show this town that we didn't care a fig for its black looks. We went slowly back to a café, ordered beer, and were slowly served, frowns being cast on our packages of food. We went slowly out of St. Sevère, hoping hard that the gendarme's wife was pulling his yellow hair out by the roots for coming back late with the bread. Hoping that the gendarme's wife had him under her thumb and made his life miserable.

But the incident so destroyed my poise that I have forgotten altogether where we repacked our rucksacks, and where we had lunch. I only remember that we came to a village called Sazeray, that was pretty and quite asleep, and that there was an ox there, in a queer pen beside a blacksmith's shop, and the purpose of such a pen was too obscure for us to fathom.

A kilometre beyond Sazeray we crossed out of Indre, glad only to have seen a corner of it, into the department of Creuse, but we were still in the rolling hedgeland of stupid people. We climbed up a short, steep slope into Tercillat, where there were many boys and girls who didn't know what to do with themselves on Good Friday, but they seemed to find us an amusing joke. From here the road became very crooked, and just past a fork where a couple of houses are called Viviers, a decent old man stopped us to ask unnecessary questions. He assured us, among other things, that Australian was the same as English, and for once I let that statement pass. They were scattering chemical manure in the fields here by hand, and the country looked prosperous.

The afternoon was warm, and we were unusually thirsty, but the next kilometres showed neither a stream nor a house close enough to lead us aside. Eventually we came to a château among trees, and in spite of our remembrance of le Coudray we resolved to try the château. We went down a long drive, and found a woman weeding in a garden. We asked her if we could buy some milk there, and without a word of reply she motioned us towards some outbuildings. We went across a muddy cowyard to the farmhouse, where an old woman with keen eyes, two young women, and a man were standing outside the door. They called the dogs off us and asked what we wanted. Could they sell us some milk? We had been told above, to come down here. No, they couldn't sell us any milk—never sold milk; had no milk, anyway.

An indignant conversation followed, and I think a cow smiled behind us. They began to cross-question us and slowly pieced together three facts; that we were foreigners; that we were walking across la belle France for our own pleasure; and that we were very thirsty. The old woman stated this, as a clear summary of our standing, and the situation changed like magic into one of lively interest, curiosity, and concern. We were expected to tell them everything about ourselves, and we told enough to make sure that milk would be forthcoming. But one of the girls was despatched to the cellar for wine, *good* wine. We protested, you saying that you would far sooner drink water if they had no milk. However, wine it was to be, and wine we drank. But you too did enough insisting to be able to drink little wine and much water. We thanked them and asked if we might fill our canettes with water, but these people, who ten minutes ago "had no milk," insisted on being allowed to fill at least one canette with fresh milk. Again we thanked them, and delicately reminded them that we had come to buy milk. But no. That would offend them. We were welcome to anything we needed, and bon voyage. We learnt from them that the woman weeding the garden was the owner of the château, and on the way out we ignored her. I suppose she cared little about that, but we felt like nasty boys.

Now, this incident looks like generous hospitality and courtesy. We had got what we wanted, and for nothing. But the circumstances had us boiling again. We knew that our approaches were wrong; that if we went with an ingratiating bow and said: "Madame, we are an American and an Australian, on a walking tour through your beautiful country, and we are very thirsty. Will Madame grant us an unusual request . . . etc." we could have got almost anything anywhere. But neither of us can do that. We hoped some day to find a person human enough to accept the two strangers on trust, without requiring that they establish themselves socially. We found more than one person of the kind, but we found that such persons had *learnt* this need of acceptance, and are very rare.

We were still inexplicably thirsty, and I would like to be able to accuse the shop at St. Sevère of having drugged the wine. We drank the milk before leaving the grounds. The road led us past the front of the château, a very comfortable, modern building facing a main road. We continued, crossing the main road, over a spur, into a valley. Our road went over a brook on a high viaduct, and then skirted rapidly down the hillside to flat country. We came to a small, shallow river and a bridge of stone. You were still so thirsty that you wanted to drink again. We took off our packs and went down to the river to drink where it flowed over fine gravel and sand, clear and shallow. The water tasted of the black humus of the pastures, but it was more satisfying than milk or wine.

We sat on the bridge. The river was the Petite Creuse, and beyond it the land was flat for a mile, black pasture. Night was coming on, but it seemed that, in the country over there, the Petite Creuse would be between us and the region of stupid people of the last two days. It seemed a better kind of world over there.

X

HILL PEOPLE

> "You must never go down to the end of the town
> If you don't go down with me."
> *A. A. Milne*

BEYOND the Petite Creuse, among the ditches and flat fields and rows of pollard osiers, I felt something of the spirit of distant Flanders, a Flanders without houses. An oblique junction-road, flat and straight, seemed like many roads I knew up there. But night came on quickly as we left the flat land for the hills again, a night so dark and lonely that we seemed to have been walking in it for hours. About one hour after we left the bridge a black silhouette against the dark sky showed us a town, or village. There were no lights, and the road turned suddenly at a bridge, and we found ourselves in the town of Châtelus-Malvaleix. We were startled to see a figure move, close to us, an old man sitting quietly on the parapet of the bridge.

This town seemed deserted. We blundered into the square, a curious open space, tilted cornerwise, but we saw no hotel. There was a dim light in a tobacconist's shop, so we went there, asked for directions, and bought cigarettes. The girl who served us was intelligent and obliging. She told us to go through to the edge of the town to the Hôtel Fontenoy, the last place on the left, and to say that we had been sent there by the tobacconist. It would be all right, she said, and we would find it very comfortable. We went through the town, a long way, and there seemed always to be still another house on the left that might be the last. Ditches and osiers by the road informed us that we must be far out of town again, so we retraced our steps, and went into a dark farmhouse to inquire. It was the Hôtel Fontenoy.

We were received by a boy who radiated happiness, good health, gaiety, and good humour. It was M. Fontenoy himself, and he must have been older than he looked, one of those firmly built young animals whose body-form shows clearly through the clothing, around the shoulders, hips, and thighs. We suspected that M. Fontenoy was only recently married, and had only recently become the proprietor of his hotel, and we liked him. He, in return, liked us. There was a young wife there, a self-effacing older woman, and a round-faced, portly man with flat feet, all sitting in a great high kitchen like an English country kitchen.

These people really did the honours. We were relieved of our packs, and taken to a round table in the dining room at which others had dined before us, but that only meant that things were nearly ready. M. Fontenoy asked if we would *faire maigre*, which is to say, were we fasting, and he commended our good sense when we said that we were not. He assisted us to "command" a meal in the manner of a head-waiter who knows the art, and the meal was not long in preparation. While we were waiting he came briskly in with a gay smile, and asked :—

"Spik Eengleesh?"

But M. Fontenoy's English had deserted him. He said that he had spent some months close to an English camp during the war and had learnt a few phrases, but they would not come back.

Then the meal began to arrive. M. Fontenoy came in to supervise the serving of each dish, and the old person with flat feet followed him, evidently to supervise M. Fontenoy. They talked, these two, and were interested rather than inquisitive as regards our doings, and they pushed us at last into an admission that we were going to Spain. The old man became excited and started to think. Then he asked "Do you speak Spanish—let me see: *Ustedes hablan español*?" To which we replied: "*Muy poco, Señor.*"

It got very little further than Fontenoy's English, but the old man was pleased, and came in with each course, and during courses, bringing other phrases of Spanish that he had thought up, or remembered, while Fontenoy beamed on us all and advised us to "spik Eengleesh."

After dinner, when we ordered our cafés complets, according to our habit, for eight o'clock in the morning, Fontenoy became suddenly illuminated and replied :—

"In the morning! All right!"

It seemed wonderful to him—here was some more English, and it fitted into the right place, it worked, it meant something! Then we bade them all a kind of tri-lingual goodnight and were shown to our rooms, two rooms that were very comfortable. Each had a window, and there was a great canopy over your bed. Sleep was long in coming to me that night, so I read in the book by Arthur Machen an essay on the legends of the Grail. And you too were not well that night, though I don't think you read the pocket Browning you had in your pack. The cause of our indisposition, mental or physical, was obscure, but I reflected that even the boy-scout handbooks advise restraint in drinking on the march. What had made us so thirsty that day?

In the morning we found this town of Châtelus-Malvaleix pleasanter than the towns of the last two days, a crooked little place of ups and downs and corners. Our way led through a narrow street past the church, past quite a smart tailor's shop, and placed us quickly in the country again.

But it was not the country of yesterday. The heights marked on our map were here between four and five hundred metres (1200-1500 feet). Yesterday we had risen from two hundred to four hundred metres (600-1,200 feet). We were climbing into the mountains of the Massif Central, and the rocks were beginning to show. The country became poor, hedges were replaced by stone walls, and instead of crops there were lean pastures and sheep. At Roches we saw a high cross on a cairn, a shrine on a hilltop, and we passed for an hour over hills that might have been in Scotland.

Our road bore steadily to the right, and the country became greener again. We were overlooking the valley of the Grande Creuse, and away to the south-west, perched high on a broad ledge of the land, was the big town of Guéret, the capital of the department of Creuse, with the round mountains of the Massif behind it.

We came to a place that overhung the river perilously, Glénic, or the Eagle's Nest, a little town clinging to the cliffs. Here we tried to buy lunch, and encountered a difficulty—everybody spoke patois, which resembled French not in the least. We managed to buy a loaf of bread in one shop, and were in a second, vainly trying to make our wants understood, when a small old woman with a slight stoop came in.

She wore a bonnet, and her hair was tightly drawn over her ears and knotted behind, and she was carrying a basket. She made her purchases, and then turned quickly round and asked us in French:

"What are you trying to buy?"

"Something for lunch," we answered.

"Don't do that here," she said. "Come with me and you'll have a better lunch than you can buy here."

We wondered, but such was the character of this old lady that we followed her out obediently. We knew it was going to be interesting. She went first to the church, and, asking us to excuse her for a couple of minutes, gave us time to examine the building. It was a very old church, built of granite, though not rudely built. It was very severe in line, and seemed to stand for the symbol of life in places like Glénic, hewn as it was from the hard rocks of the land. As an expression of simple, early Gothic through the difficult and unsuitable medium of granite I was pleased with it. But how old was it? I could not guess.

Madame finished her prayer and filled a small bottle with holy water from the font. Then she led us down a very steep, rough track, where stones rolled away from under our feet. She lived, she said, pointing to the bridge away below, down there, and it was not far; we would soon be there. We were not required to explain ourselves, for Madame understood, and she told us that were she a man she would be doing just the same as we were—seeing the world on foot—for, she continued, there was nothing better in life than to see the world, preferably on foot. She had not seen it, but she knew much of it, because never a stranger passed through Glénic who did not visit her. We inferred, therefore, that for a little while we were the rightful possessions of this decided old lady.

We came to her place, a café-restaurant that had been undergoing some alterations and was still in the condition of a house whence the plasterers have just departed. Madame began to make a fire of twigs, telling us all the time a little more. Her name, she said, was Amélie Martin, and for three hundred years the Martins had had their licence for a restaurant on this spot. They belonged to the country and she loved Creuse, finding it always beautiful. But there was the world, and strangers from the world were always passing by. She talked to them all, and had learnt much of many countries and peoples. Recently, it had been two Chinese, extremely interesting. In the village they looked upon her as "queer", deranged. But they were, after all, ignorant people, circumscribed by that ugly patois. Very few of them spoke French, so how could they know that there was a world outside the little village, a bigger world than their beautiful Creuse? And these strangers, many of them remembered her, the old "maman de Glénic," and some of them came back. There were people who came regularly to stay there for a few weeks' vacation every year; came from distant parts of France into the restful valley here. And others, who did not come back, wrote to her. She brought out a bundle of letters and postcards from people who did not forget, and she read a sentence here and there with feeling.

She was married. Her husband was out but he would come back for his lunch, perhaps late, he was not particular. And she had children, of whom two daughters and a son assumed definition in my mind. But her talk was not gossip. She knew that it mattered little to us whether she had three or twenty children. But she had educated them and they were dispersed, married well enough. One son-in-law was a gifted man. She loved to listen to him, she said, but he seemed to care little about talking with her, and of course, that was natural—she did not understand the things that absorbed his interest, could not talk about them; still, it was excellent to listen when he talked to others, for his mind was a wonderful study.

All the time she was busy preparing a meal, and the smell of wood smoke was added to the smell of fresh plaster. There were an omelette, cold roast pork, brawn, cheese, butter, peach conserve, milk, cream, and wine. We had our own bread, and she said that it would be sensible to eat it. And as for your request for milk, milk was good to drink, and was there in plenty; wine too was good to drink, and was also in plenty. Both were there, and we might please ourselves about it.

That meal, and the conversation that surrounded it, were a joy. Everything was home-made, or home-grown, and abundantly placed before us. The cheese, she explained, she made herself, and sold it. Two months it took, to make a little, round cheese ready to sell, and it had to be turned every day in order to drain properly; and in the end the price was little—but, if one made many cheeses, they brought a return. We were shown many cheeses of all ages, ranged on shelves. She explained that they were good to eat at any stage, though not good to carry until they were mature. The very new ones were excellent with fresh cream, if one liked that sort of thing; and forthwith, a very new one was chosen, cut, and doused with fresh cream for our benefit. It was far better in flavour than the similar cœur à la crême served in Paris, but after our lunch we were able to eat only a little of it. We regretted to see so little of this cheese eaten, and said so, but Madame remarked that it didn't matter; her husband ate one every day, and would finish that one.

It sounds as if Madame did all the talking, but she wasted no words. Everything she said or asked was direct, definite, and by well placed questions she derived from us as much of our own story as interested her, which was a good deal. She asked, among other things, where we had slept the night before, and told us that she knew "young Fontenoy"—his mother had worked for her. It was good to hear that he was managing the business well. She seemed to care little about bare facts, information. What she wanted to know was how people live in far away places; what life is like to them; what it felt like to us, and she obtained much of the answer not by questioning, but merely by observing us, representatives of our countries and peoples. (This is an American: I will watch him). And she took it as quite natural that I should not be married; there was still plenty of time for that, she said, and it was wise to know something of the world, of men, first.

I wondered, and I think you did too, how this old lady had come to be so different from her surroundings. Had she been educated in a city she would have been a gifted, intellectual woman. Here, she had been able to free herself from every mental obscurity of the peasant, and had risen into the clear light of her intelligence, to find herself alone. She had no contempt for the slow country people—she was one of them, and at seventy years of age was still doing the physical work of her own people, accepting it as natural that she should. But for her mind there was no companionship in Glénic. Even her husband, it seemed, was no more than an ordinary peasant. The only companionship she enjoyed was that of passing strangers, but that she claimed; and so delightful it was for the strangers that they wrote to her, even came back.

She gave the explanation herself. She told us that when she was young, a talented woman came to stay at Glénic. This woman had intended to stay only three weeks, but she stayed for forty-three years, and ultimately died there. She was a linguist and a musician, able to sing, and perform on the piano, guitar, and other instruments. She interested herself in Madame Amélie's upbringing and education, and the two became the closest of companions.

"Everything," said Madame, "everything that I learnt, I learnt from her."

This woman's name was never mentioned, but there, in her, was the influence that transformed an acute peasant mind into a clear, lonely intelligence. That influence increased the amplitude, the mental vigour of her life immeasurably, and it robbed her of the close companionship that supports life. Were there a choice, I do not know which she would have chosen—perhaps she did choose. But always, this *influence*, that people exert so proudly, confer so generously and confidently upon others, seems to me the most dangerous of gifts. How does it feel to you?

Madame accepted the natural fact that people pay for meals, with a quiet courtesy. Our lunch, she replied, would be eight francs. This was the most illuminating bill ever presented to us in France. We had paid eighteen francs elsewhere for good but ordinary meals, yet this ample déjeuner, fresh as the meadows beside the Creuse, was only eight francs. Madame saw our astonishment and understood it without sentiment, just as she accepteda ten-franc note without argument. Ten francs for that meal, we understood, was quite profitable business. Well—we had prepared excellent meals for ourselves in Paris on about ten francs a day. It was the just value of things.

We told her that before proceeding to Guéret we would like a swim. Where could we swim? She was delighted at that. If there was one thing that was important in life, said Madame, it was being clean. She herself bathed regularly in the weir—irregular behaviour in local eyes—and we could do so too. She would lend us towels, and garments to prevent us from scandalising the public. But we had towels and we would prefer to swim in a quiet reach of the river. All right; she would show us where. She climbed a steep hill as easily as we did, pointed out trees under which her dead friend used to sing songs to the guitar when she was young, and she pointed out a place where we could swim.

Throughout these hours of conversation Madame Martin had never once smiled. Her intelligence had shown joy but not laughter. Life to her is grave. We said good-bye with deep appreciation, and I promised to write. That promise has been kept, as you know, and she has faithfully replied, calling herself our maman de Glénic, and she refers to you as le petit Max—you, who look over the heads of most Frenchmen! Her first reply came last Summer, to say that she had been out in the fields for many days, harvesting, and found that it was becoming hard work. The next answer told of the death of one of her daughters, and revealed a deep religious faith, not without showing a realisation that faith in Heaven is barren comfort. "Adieu, Madame Martin, but you will not be forgotten."

Our swim. The Grande Creuse is a deep river with high banks and a strong current. We had to stand in it up to our waists, and it was very cold. We squatted naked on the bank and washed our dirty clothes, but the spot was far from secluded, for on the opposite bank was a main road partly concealed by bushes, that only betrayed itself when a vehicle passed along. Three or four times we had to dart for cover, and we confirmed a belief that women are deceitful creatures. They look back, long and long, in the hope that you'll break cover, for they really want to be shocked. Unfortunately, if the wish be gratified, they will almost certainly be indignant, complain to punitive authorities, and they take a fierce joy in your punishment. I could remind you . . . but remind yourself.

Because we intended to stay in Guéret, the march for that day was only twenty kilometres. Time mattered little, and we spread our clothes on the bushes to dry. We ate the apples that Madame had given us, and an old horse ate the peelings, even wanted to eat our clothes. I think that horses ought to be allowed to eat clothes, for it's so much more comfortable without them in the warm sun.

The things dried quickly, and when we had dressed we went across country to the main road. We went through a hedge into a sloping meadow under the hills, and found this little pasture crossed by small irrigation channels, carefully adjusted to the slope and the requirements of soakage. It was the first irrigated pasture we had seen. The field was covered with molehills, and in the far corner was a boy gathering pissenlits, loosening the roots with a table knife. I wanted to remind myself of the forgotten French for moles, and when I asked him the boy said "les taupes, Monsieur," and looked up at us. He was a polite boy, with the sad disfigurement of a hare-lip.

We crossed fields and hedges, and found the main road, a dusty route nationale. We had not gone far when a man in a brown velvet suit, talking to another man on the roadside, whistled familiarly to us. We turned, and he ran towards us, fell into step beside us, and said briskly, "Un, deux! Un, deux!"—the "Left, right!" of the French Army. A casual, happy-go-lucky chap he was, with a brown skin, chubby face, twinkling brown eyes, and a black moustache; a kind of natural animal who had never heard of embarrassment. He laughed and talked, sang and whistled, causing us much entertainment and some boredom. He was walking to Guéret; so were we; and obviously, we were the kind of people to whom he could attach himself for company.

He was a farm labourer, free for the week-end, and going home to sleep with his wife, as he bluntly put it. He lectured us on the common-sense of traffic rules—always keep to the right, because, if you're knocked down, you fall to the right, away from the traffic, don't you see? Toujours à droite, toujours! It was repeated many times. He told us, too, that he was captured early in the War and spent most of the time in Germany, luckily! The Germans treated him well, and he stood in favour with the supervising officer, and was allowed a certain amount of liberty. He "dug in," as British troops would put it, and was regarded not unkindly by a young German woman. Oh, a fortunate way to pass through the War, but he was glad that it was over; that he was out of it.

We went under a railway bridge and realised that we were in Guéret. He said that he had to catch a train at six o'clock, but there was plenty of time, and we must, oh yes, we must, come and have a beer with him. He took us into a bistro, ordered beer, and began talking about his son. A clever son, in college, which meant that they had to be very economical, but the son must have his opportunity—he passed examinations so well. I pictured this son as an effeminate, studious boy of about twelve; mother, and the rustic father awed by his erudition, scraping and saving to give the boy's talent a chance. He "knew Latin," and there was praise from his masters, etc.

More beer had appeared, and we reminded this cheerful brown puzzle that he had two minutes to catch his train. That didn't matter—he'd catch it all right! He delayed, shaking hands, then rushed off, all anticipation, and quite untroubled; but if he caught his train he must have had to chase it. We paid for the beer and went out.

We went to the Hôtel de l'Espérance, feeling a little out of breath, a little overwhelmed by his animal spirits. But we were enjoying these hill people.

XI

"MOUNTAIN INTERVAL"

Why did we go to Guéret? We knew nothing about it but it was on the way and its size and rank as capital of the department seemed to promise the existence of attractions. They were not there, and all we found in Guéret itself was an assemblage of public buildings; the préfecture, gendarmerie, hôtel de ville, cathedral, barracks, hospitals; an assemblage to be found in the capital of every department. But here, there was little to render them interesting. The steep slope of the town made it tiresome to me, and the dust made it disagreeable. There was a dusty public square, without pretensions, almost without a tree. There were a few steep, old, cobbled streets devoid of charm. Guéret, indeed, looked much more attractive from a distance.

Fortunately, life is interesting nearly everywhere, and in the life of Guéret we were not disappointed. The garrison consisted partly of Algerian troops, whose uniforms and red tarbashes were a change to us after the monotonous blue of the French soldiers. And our hotel itself provided entertainment. The hotel was better than it looked, and in our room were some ugly little ornaments that came from Limoges. They set me thinking, and for three days afterwards I could feel the influence, the pull of Limoges, though it was far from Guéret, seventy-five kilometres to the south-west.

I wondered if the hotel would serve us our dinner in that little coffee room where low persons seemed to congregate, but we dined in an inner room, in a withdrawn and stately manner; dined well, and the meal was served on Limoges china. The atmosphere of that meal invaded us, and we finished it properly by ordering coffee and liqueurs in quite a reckless manner. The bill for the indulgence was eleven francs, but the money was not wasted, for the mood of quiet exhilaration carried us out into the town, into a small café on the corner of the square, to drink three-and-a-half francs worth of coffee and cognac, and to sit observing uninteresting people for half an hour. They seemed to spend the half hour in observing us, but we agreed that they were entitled to do so, though they were getting a more edifying entertainment than they gave. By that time we were ready for the dance at the hotel.

I don't think this dance was a regular Saturday night function, but was probably a part of the Easter festivities. It looked promising to see a gendarme sitting at a table in the office, in a place that gave him a clear view right through the coffee room into the dance hall, and the crowd too looked promising, but we can record that Guéret takes its amusement with sober dignity, and the function held our attention only on account of its curious rusticity. But there was a feeling of exclusiveness there. We were not unwelcome as spectators, but I don't think we could have become part of that dance had we tried.

There were young boys and girls, grown men and women, perhaps a hundred altogether, and the older women were much older, more numerous, than the older men. They were all dressed in thei Sunday clothes, and behaviour in the dance hall was stiffly formal, studied, as if everyone had read a manual of etiquette before coming there. The simple correctness lay mainly in a formality of bows, the way of holding a partner, and decorum in dancing. They seemed to be there in small parties, for the men did not approach any girl or woman at random, as they commonly do in French dance halls, but they all enjoyed it thoroughly. You noticed one boy of twelve or thirteen who danced with an enviable grace and poise of manner, but most of the dancers did not excel.

To me the most interesting part of the whole thing was the music. The musicians were in a low minstrels' gallery and there were only three instruments, two clarionets and an accordion. They played briskly enough, a waltz and a kind of one-step, but they played only two tunes. If an encore were demanded they repeated the tune they had just played, and nobody expected anything else. You told me that they continued until about two o'clock in the morning, always playing the same tunes, but my liqueur and cognac worked better than yours that night.

There was always a crowd of onlookers in the doorway of the hall, and much jostling of people passing between the hall and the coffee room, where cigarettes were smoked and drinks were consumed. But nobody seemed to consume too many and the gendarme had nothing to do. By the time we decided to go to bed I found that I had enjoyed the night, and I was feeling glad that these boys and girls in Guéret seemed to want nothing better than this quiet dance. Oh, no! They were not quiet; *they* talked and laughed gaily and loudly enough. But the whole thing, if rustic, was untarnished in its inconsequence. It was good to be remote from Paris, among people who seemed to care not at all for the ways of Paris, but found satisfaction in their own old-fashioned ways. Guéret, after all, was not so hopelessly dull.

The next morning was Easter, and you wanted to go to church. The church or cathedral is a mournful building hidden away in the older, tortuous part of the town. Like the little church of Glénic, it is built of granite, but it seemed to me to be a much newer structure than the Glénic church, and it has little beauty, outside or inside.

Many people were making their way towards the building, and we found it nearly full when we got there. Each worshipper selected a chair from one of several piles of chairs, and arranged his place to suit himself. This resulted in a good deal of movement, confusion, and waste of space, and many who arrived late had to stand. The people seemed to attach a serious importance to this Easter service, and were all dressed as for a ceremony. Numerous men who looked like prosperous men of the town suggested by their bearing that this was one of the few services of the year that they attended. You were interested in this curiously mixed congregation, and remarked that there are still classes in France, and, as I scanned the faces, I had to admit that the congregation could easily have been divided into two parts that might have represented two distinct races, they were so different.

There were peasants and burghers in that church, and the difference was more profound than a difference in costume. To have exchanged costumes, indeed, would have made both groups look ridiculous, for there were distinctions in the form of the head, the shapes of the features, carriage of the body, and, most significant of all, in the attitude towards the service itself. Wrinkled old peasant women wearing stiff little white caps seemed to be there out of devotion to the Good Lord, while smartly dressed burghers had the air of being there because one must appear at church on Easter Sunday—everybody goes.

We had expected to find an unusual beauty in this Easter service, but we were disappointed. It was conducted in as perfunctory a way as the Thursday afternoon service at Orléans; the music was not only poor, but was technically bad; and over the whole church there was a suggestion of dusty pasteboard and tinsel. In place of the solemnity and significance of Easter there was puppetry, and only the eyes of the old peasant women seemed to look patiently through it into the mystery for which it stood. I wished we had been at Bourges for Easter, where there is vitality in the church; where I remembered seeing printed notices, propaganda of the most telling and penetrating kind, announcing that there is no substitute, in advanced thought, in scepticism, or in science, for the faith of the one true church. Or, I felt, in village churches like St. Lyé and Glénic, there would be services, earnest and sincere, that would make this Easter Sunday real.

We returned for our packs, which we had left ready at the hotel. One part of the burden was discarded, those old Paris boots, to which you seemed very attached, having carried them all the way from Bourges. We decided that it would be proper to leave them in a prominent place in the bedroom as a kind of extra tip for the chambermaid. I looked at your darkening beard and wondered secretly where you would decide to leave that behind too, for to have done so would have lightened you considerably. Your last shave was at Mehun-sur-Yèvre, seven days ago, and the beard was pronounced but not promising.

On the way out of town we visited several shops, bought bread, cakes, and cheese, discovering with impatience that even in a town like Guéret it is impossible to buy portable provisions that will make an attractive picnic lunch for travellers like us. Fresh food is bulky and hard to carry, but tinned food is monotonous. Near the outskirts of the town you got some films for the camera, and we were tempted by a pastry shop. You put those two tarts into your pack with an almost reverent care.

Once on the road, we found the world to be a bright, fresh place again. It was a main road, that wound up and around the mountain, into the woods, and we soon lost sight of Guéret. A frequented road, too, traversed by a regular service of motor 'buses between Guéret and Bourganeuf, the first such service we had noticed; a road heavily used by general motor traffic, and one car came swiftly around a bend without warning, on the wrong side, and we had to dodge quickly and swear afterwards. A road too, that was cared for. It was regularly swept clear of leaves and rubbish, as are many of the main roads in France. There were oaks and beeches in the forest, and the fallen leaves of last year were thick underneath the trees. It was a refreshing morning, but the latest start we had made or were ever to make on the whole journey, for we left Guéret at twenty minutes past eleven.

And it was a morning that showed us in advance the pleasant out-door world of the next three days. Owing to the difficulty of getting accommodation at small places, we decided to make three short stages, nearer to thirty than forty kilometres, and the country during those three days showed little variety. The mountains behind Guéret rise to nearly two thousand feet in height, and as soon as the road placed us south of this ridge we were in the real Massif Central.

The Massif is a broad, flattened hump, that rises to about three thousand feet in its highest parts, and the levels of its hilltops and ridges are very even. But the streams have cut deeply into the hump and flow in winding valleys, narrow and tortuous, almost gorge-like in places. It is a country of steep though rounded hills, quite devoid of ruggedness, deceptively gentle, covered with little woods of pine and birch and other deciduous trees, abounding in small pastures, and everywhere populated. But the road goes up and down, descending five hundred feet only to climb again five hundred feet, steeply. The best ways from place to place are not along the streams, but along the round crests of the ridges, whence they plunge or zig-zag down to the larger towns in the valleys. The gendarmes ride horses because much of the country is too hilly for bicycles. Railways wind along the opener valleys, going through many tunnels, crossing and recrossing the streams over the lofty, round arches of the only kind of viaduct that is built in France. Life is based on the forests and pastures, and the people use small, yellow-brown oxen or cows for transport. They yoke them in pairs, by the horns, to the pole of the waggon, and the harness makes the beasts appear to have hats on their heads. Many times along the road we were to meet the smell of newly-sawn timber, and the smell of pigs, quaint pigs, black and white, marked as though black ink had been spilt over them, but in a regular way, over the snout, the middle of the back, and the rump.

Our road bore steadily to the south all the way, crossing the western flank of the Massif. I don't think that we climbed higher than two thousand two hundred feet anywhere, and the highest hills we saw were about two thousand six hundred feet in height. The country was too hilly for long, sweeping views, and at no time during these three days had I the real feeling that we were in the mountains. It felt no higher to me than the rolling land of Devon, but this land of early shadows and cool evenings, in the middle of France, had not the richness or colour of Devon. Only one thing made us realise its height. Spring had receded, for the season was less advanced; the leaves of the birches were the palest, tenderest sea-green; the woods were only just in leaf.

On that first day we bought wine for lunch in the village of St. Christophe, a tiny, muddy place a little off the road. They were gentle, pleasant people in the wine shop, unusually friendly to strangers. We ate our lunch by the roadside about a mile past the village, among bracken and brambles, at a spot whence there was a good view of the mountains behind Guéret, and of several villages far apart, all, like St. Christophe, tiny clusters around tiny churches.

We were inexplicably happy about nothing, and we didn't hesitate to say so. We took some stock of the changes that had come over us; how we seemed immune from fatigue; how brown we had become; how we had ceased to be concerned about daily expenses, knowing, as we now did, the fair prices of things; in fact, we told each other that we were experienced, free from all the little worrying things that detract from the enjoyment of simple pleasure; that we were deep now in the joy of this simple pleasure. We enjoyed each other very much indeed during that hour, and I think, from noises in the bushes behind us, that we were stalked and observed by a shepherd of the hills, but we didn't care.

There was the threat of a shower early in the afternoon, but the weather held fine, and the road led us past several sawmills, little enterprises, worked by steam tractors that evidently visited mill after mill as they were required. We crossed a stream, the Gartempe, the last water we were to see that belongs to the Creuse, and at half-past five came to the town of Pontarion, where we proposed to spend the night.

But Pontarion is the least hospitable town in France—except one, I think?

It is not a village; it is a small town, and it has three hotels, but not one of those hotels needed our money. At the first, a small round girl of about twenty assured us the hotel was full: that there were many people in the town. I asked if the Easter holidays had anything to do with this rush of people to Pontarion. For some obscure reason this amused the girl, who struggled with a smile that said: "Indeed, you are very foolish—or simple, Sir."

But she readily agreed that of course it was due to Easter (if I wished to think so), and said that there was another hotel down the street. We went there, and were bluntly refused admittance.

We crossed the street to the third hotel and were pleasantly received in the bar by a middle-aged woman. We explained to her, and she to us. She had, she said, limited accommodation for travellers—the house, as we could see, was small—and were there room she would be pleased to take us, but she had some relatives staying with her, and the few beds were occupied. People did not ordinarily come to her, as the first hotel was the one travellers preferred, and she was sure they had plenty of room there. But the patron was away, and the girl was doubtless afraid to accept the responsibility of admitting us. No, it would be little use to return there and try to persuade her. As for the second hotel, we were better out of it than in it—a rough place. She was very sorry, but thought we had better go on to Bourganeuf.

Now, the personal facts sounded like Autruy, but this woman seemed sincere, and she was polite. We thanked her, and asked for beer, as an acknowledgment of her unusual qualities, and also because we wanted beer. We remembered the mayor of Nançay, and made up our minds not to see the mayor of Pontarion.

We set out for Bourganeuf. I looked at you, and I thought of myself. That beard was a wild-looking growth, and our clothes were queer. Could it be that people feared us, thought we were undesirable characters, desperados? No, for I look too mild in any clothes. But I thought of that beard and wondered. In its seventh-day condition it was an unpleasant sight and I held it under suspicion, but I said nothing. Perhaps this is why I felt less angry with Pontarion than I had been with the Gâtinais, Nançay, and the gendarme of St. Sevère.

There was a good stone bridge over a river where we left Pontarion, and on the pillars the river was duly labelled LE THORION. It is a stream that flows down to join the Vienne above Limoges. Beyond it the road climbed a long, steep hill, and we walked for two monotonous hours towards the sunset. We came at length to the brink of a slope so steep that the main road from Guéret, which we had not followed, was almost directly below us, far below. Our road plunged thence into the large town of Bourganeuf, which lies in an open vale on flat ground where the Thorion makes an amazing bend of an almost complete circle and is joined by a brook called the Gane Molle.

In the dark, the town seemed to be made of solid rectangular blocks, a toy town, with no insides to the houses, for there were no lights. We found an hotel, and were accepted at once, and were ushered into the dining room. It was half-past seven and we were hungry, but we were at once served with a good meal by a bouncing maid. There was only one cruet in this dining room, and it was constantly being passed from table to table.

We met, here, a new kind of bread, a long, twist-loaf, with a knob at each end, a pale, hard crust, and a tough interior. I wish I had made notes on the many kinds of bread we met in France and Spain, for bread seems to be a sensitive expression of the people who eat it, but I recall only the best and the worst. This bread was unpleasant, and I think it must have originated in Pontarion.

There was rather a queer group of men and youths in that dining room, regular customers, apparently. They caressed the bouncing maid publicly and were having a good deal of immodest fun at the expense of a man who held himself apart and was eating special food. We gathered that he was sick, and we gathered more than a hint of the nature of his sickness. The maid seemed to care little for what was said or done, but she hurried them up, urging them to finish their meal and go. When they were gone the management and family came in to dine, impressively.

We went up to a small room with one bed and a window that looked over the back courts of Bourganeuf. I think it was the only window in the town to remain open that night.

In the morning we consulted the patron about hotels at Eymoutiers, and he recommended us to go to the Hôtel Couégnas, which he said was very good. To get out of Bourganeuf we had to go westward, and at the end of the town you had an inspiration. We would buy butter and honey, and see if they would carry in our packs. We bought both, and some bread and wine also.

Turning on to the main south road we climbed rapidly to high ground, and looking back from one point we discovered a charming picture. Bourganeuf lay far below, hills closing in to meet it on either side; hills behind it; grass-green hills. And the town, in the morning light, was more of a toy town than ever, neat blocks, all squares and simple gables, painted gaily in bright red and warm brown. It had the startling simplicity, vividness, and primness of the Dutch views in children's picture books, where red is so red, and green so green. Surely, it was the proper place for us to buy honey and butter, and it had no right to be a small French town in the Massif Central—it was too gay, too rectangular, for that!

Bourganeuf is connected with Limoges by rail, and is about seventy kilometres from it by the railway, though less than fifty in a direct line. But Bourganeuf, unlike Guéret, is in the drainage basin of the upper Vienne, and has a right to be a kind of mountain outpost of Limoges.

The proximity of an industrial city interested me. How far from it, for how long, would we feel its influence? To the east of us, on the eastern flank of the Massif, where the streams flow the opposite way, was Clermont-Ferrand, another industrial city. We were closest to it at Bourganeuf, only a hundred kilometres, about sixty-three miles off, but of Clermont-Ferrand we were not able to hear a whisper. But at Guéret there were objects from Limoges; Bourganeuf was at the end of a railway from Limoges. Where would we meet people who spoke of Limoges? I have driven all around Birmingham in an automobile at a distance of thirty miles, and even so close as that there were only the signposts to hint of the existence of a big city.

We passed, not far from Bourganeuf, a place where some fine old beeches were being sawn into boards by a tractor; the boards neatly stacked on chocks, one on top of the other, with about an inch of air-space between them, so that the pile resembled the original log.

We continued over the hills, and at the sunny, scattered village of St. Junien we talked with an old woman while we rested on the grass. She was taking clothes down to the brook to wash them and seemed to be in no hurry. She told us that the day before a Dutchman had passed through, walking, like us, and that she had given him shelter for the night. He seemed honest, had little money, and was looking for work, but he had the necessary papers and she felt safe. She "supposed" that of course we had papers too? We replied that we had, but we did not give the old dame the satisfaction of letting her see them, which was all she wanted, and the inexorable Hamilton watch put an end to the conversation. She studied us curiously as we walked off.

We came soon to the boundary of the department of Haute-Vienne, and crossed out of Creuse. There was an imposing stone like a large tombstone to mark the boundary line; an amusing stone, for the half belonging to the department of Creuse had been newly painted, exactly half, the vertical line of bisection precisely reached by the paint of Creuse but not transgressed. Haute-Vienne, it seemed, cared less for appearances. And, indeed, this part of Haute-Vienne was different from Creuse, was drier, poorer, and we walked a long way before finding a pleasant spot by running water, for our picnic.

At length we found a place, and had to jump across the brook and clamber through a hedge to get to it. We sat down in an open meadow that was intersected by small irrigation ditches. Off came our boots and we washed our feet in the brook, not because they needed it, but as a form of enjoyment. The canettes we placed in a shady pool, and we had the freshest picnic lunch of the journey so far, the honey and butter having carried well. There was not a house in sight, though we knew there was one close enough, just hidden by the brow of a hill behind us. A boy was amusing himself near the house while we were eating lunch, and a man came into the field with a spade. He was diverting the water among the ditches, moving and arranging little dams made of sods of turf, and examining and cleaning the channels. He came over to us and asked us not to leave any paper or rubbish in the meadow, framing the request in a direct, friendly way.

During the afternoon we came to a place with an ancient stone tower on one side of the road and an artificial lake on the other. It was Peyrat-le-Château, near the little river Maude. We went into a bistro there, and drank beer in a room that looked across the tiny lake, while Madame talked to us pleasantly. The place, she said, without looking up from her sewing, used to be called Peyrat-*le-fort*, and was important in olden times but is of little account now. It has a paper mill, and there is a tramway to Eymoutiers, but, she complained, an autobus to Bourganeuf was badly needed. She talked of Limoges in a matter-of-fact way, but to be in touch with Bourganeuf, she insisted, would mean prosperity for Peyrat. While we were there some people came in, and I seem to remember that you found them in some way remarkable, but I have forgotten.

All the way from Peyrat we had the tramway beside us, following the steep grades of the road. At one halt under a clay bank some boys, free for this Easter Monday, said a few words to us, telling us, among other things, that the next department, Corrèze, was very beautiful, a pleasant thing to be told by rough country lads. The holiday spirit was in the air and many people on bicycles passed along the road. I remember that this high country here seemed almost flat for a long distance. We came to a sawmill with a tractor and a pile of fresh sawdust in the open. There was so much of it that we discussed the possible uses to which it might be put, but came to no sensible conclusion, for it must be hard to dispose of a large pile of sawdust when it lies in a remote corner of Haute-Vienne.

Late in the afternoon this flat country asserted its elevated character of plateau, for we found ourselves looking across a wide, open valley, the valley of the Vienne, and somewhere below must be Eymoutiers, but we could not see it. Going down the long incline towards the river we realised that there were many hills lower than the plateau in that wide valley, and a large town might well hide itself. We crossed the river on a stone bridge and turned sharply to the left, and there, in front of us, was Eymoutiers, spread along the river in a green vale, a lovely place indeed. But the first building was the Gendarmerie Nationale, a little more conspicuous than usual.

There were several hotels in Eymoutiers, and that of Couégnas was hard to find, but when found it made us feel that the world was a happy place. Madame Couégnas proved to be a handsome, dark woman of about forty-five, with a good figure and a gentle, courteous manner; a woman with the kind of smile that evoked loyalty, and her staff cared for us in a way that makes this hotel one of our happiest memories of French people, I think. We were given a large room, with three beds and a window that looked over a well-kept garden where roses were in bloom, and we could see the green hills beyond the river.

But it was only six o'clock and the soft evening light invited us outside. We went down into the town and discovered that a country town in France can be both clean and beautiful. Even the public conveniences in this unheard-of place were modern. But sanitation had not deprived Eymoutiers of its heritage of simple, unintentional beauty. There were traceries in the windows of the church that I wanted to draw—always I am regretting that I have no talent for drawing—and there were flumes, mill-races, flour mills, and weirs along the river that we wanted to explore, but they were strangely inaccessible. At the eastern end of the town was a minute wedge of a park, so well cared for that we thought it must be private. On the way back we found Eymoutiers lively with the voices and play of many more children than are usual in French towns, and we climbed up a crooked, cobbled street to the upper square and our hotel, more and more thankful to have found a place that brought no disappointment, though we had come expecting little.

We sat on the ledge of our window until nightfall, prolonging the quiet enjoyment of this evening, and I contemplated virginal birches on the far hill. A touch of Spring fever came over me, and I wrote something in my note-book.

The dining room of the hotel was a surprise thoroughly in keeping with Eymoutiers. It had never heard of dinginess, but was simply furnished as a room in a private house. There were vases of flowers on the tables, and the linen (we had forgotten such things as table linen!) was snow white and perfectly fresh. Have you ever found out the name of those flowers that were on our table? There were only three other people there, a family of mother, father, and young son, and we suspected that they understood English. The meal finished with rosy apples, and we heard father tell the son that they were called " appls" in English.

After dinner Madame presented the fiches, and the whole house made quiet fun helping us to fill them in. The family from the dining room joined the conversation, and told us they were from Limoges, the industrial city that makes many things besides china; that even made the boots I was wearing. It was less than fifty kilometres away, down the Vienne, and there were two different railways from Limoges to Eymoutiers, one along the Vienne, a main line, and the other through Châteauneuf-la-Forêt and the hills. Eymoutiers, they said, is a place where people from Limoges come to spend a quiet week—that is, people who like a quiet week. The father knew a little English and the boy was learning, but was too shy to try to speak with us, though an eagerness to do so struggled quaintly with his shyness.

We declined the sociability of a seat in front of a log fire on the open hearth, and went early to bed. In the morning Madame Couégnas presented a bill that was no larger than our average daily hotel bill, and she told us that the road to Treignac was exceedingly beautiful, but we knew that it is wicked to start with preconceived notions, and we expected no more of the road to-day than similarity to the road of yesterday.

We followed the main valley upstream for about an hour, and then turned into the valley of a tributary that comes from the south-east, a river that is not named on our map. The road was indeed beautiful at first, running high up along the steep hillside, giving imposing views up and down the deep valley. The main railway, too, followed this little river without detracting at all from its beauty. As we advanced the valley became shallower, opener; the dryness we had noticed when we first entered this corner of Haute-Vienne became evident, and there were ditches for the irrigation of the pastures in the valley bottom. At the end of the second hour we crossed the boundary into the department of Corrèze. The stream made a sharp bend not far past here at a place where the valley was narrow, and there were many brambles along the banks. The road turned more sharply south, and we climbed up towards Lacelle.

On the far side of the stream, just before coming to Lacelle, was an attractive group of buildings, a small château in green pastures, and a little church with what we came to call an "open," or "fretted" belfry, the three bells hung in apertures in a gabled extension of the peak of the western wall. You looked across there and said, "A., I'm sure this is a place where we can buy milk."

But Lacelle was forbidding, an open, untidy place of new hotels, all small; a kind of resort in the making. We went right through the village trying to buy provisions, but nobody had any provisions —or they said they had none; so we went right back again to a tiny shop we had passed by in scorn a quarter of an hour ago. A girl sold us a poor choice of cakes, cheese, and chocolate, and directed us further back still to the bakery, where the bread was of the kind for which we have blamed Pontarion. The baker showed us where we could buy milk, and the place was nearly opposite a path to the church, where you had thought we could buy milk when we passed there first. The milk had to be explained, for the honest patron seemed to think that wine would be much better for us, and when we got outside we found that our tempers were short.

We walked back through Lacelle without talking, and about a kilometre beyond it we turned by common consent into an irrigated meadow that lay in an elbow of the road. We utilised some turf sods there to dam one of the ditches, and put the bottle of milk in the water to cool. Then there was a mild explosion of tempers. We took each other to task. You were annoyed with me because I thought it not worth while to go to the château for the milk at first. I was annoyed with you for wanting milk, and wanting it so persistently. You were further annoyed with me for explaining to the people in the shop why we wanted milk. Moreover, I was annoyed with my boots, for the mountain roads had worn them rapidly and there was a loose flap of the sole under each toe, that made the morning's journey a very uncomfortable one for me. And we were both annoyed with the ugly, stupid village of Lacelle, where people have no provisions. We were what we call "griped," but we made our accusations, and in about five minutes decided that none of these things mattered at all. It was far more sensible to sit down and enjoy lunch, which we did.

It was not a bad lunch, for there were some of yesterday's butter and honey: the cheese was quite edible, and the milk fresh and cool. But we replaced the cakes in the pack as an emergency ration. Several vehicles and a cyclist passed down the road while we were there, and all the people watched us until the bend hid us from view. We could see the railway in the valley, and a train passed along to the east; so I think we must have sat in the shade there for a long time. Before leaving we collected our rubbish and placed it where it could do no harm, and we restored the turf sods in the ditch to their original places, for the ditching and control of the downward flow of water in this meadow aroused our admiration.

Beyond Lacelle there was little of interest to me for a long way. We saw farms where the "inked" pigs of the Massif Central were numerous; we crossed one of those level plateaux of yesterday; and at one place the road embankment itself formed a dam across the headwaters of a small river called the Soudhene. Beside this lake there was a new stone house, an ugly, two-storied house, and we wondered again why people build such houses when there are so many other kinds of houses that can be built. There was a stone wall on the embankment between the road and the water, on which a group of women was sitting—the kind of women who gossip about obstetrics. Their conversation stopped when we said bon jour to them. Several of them returned the salutation, but we felt the stares of all following us.

The road came down from the plateau to meet, quite suddenly, the brawling headwaters of the Vézère at what we called a "photographable spot." The river was a miniature torrent in a small rocky valley, bare and barren, that became deeper and greener as we wound along it. In about an hour it became a winding gorge, and the road crossed to the other side by a low stone bridge. The river was curiously still here, and the road, steadily climbing up the valley side, became a town road, with trees and a stone wall beside it, and presently a footpath! Suddenly we beheld Treignac, huddled in a sharp bend in the narrowest part of the valley. There was nothing to do but to stop and look at it, for Treignac was exquisitely pretty.

Most of Treignac was on our side of the river, on the bluff that fitted into the sharp elbow of the stream. On the far slope the soil was terraced in very steep gardens and little pasture enclosures, in one of which a brown cow browsed, hung in perilous unconcern above the river. Along the banks in the bend were a few buildings crowded together, and a stone bridge crossed the stream. A road over the bridge seemed to have been literally bent downward like a strip of metal to fit the hollow of the gorge at the bridge. On the side of the bluff was Treignac, as though it had been sculptured out of the rock. The houses seemed not to cling to the steep hillside, but to have been set there with a fixity that made them part of the slope. Prominent among them was the church, with its high roof like a barn, and small windows high up in the walls. Below us was a neat electric power station beside a flume, and, upstream, the quiet reach of river (held by the weir at the power station) and the low stone arches of the bridge we had crossed. Eymoutiers had an open, airy beauty. Treignac was clustered tightly in a nest of the hills, a neat, sharp definition in its crowded edges, corners and curves. It was what the French call *bijou* and we were never able to decide which pleased us the more, Eymoutiers or Treignac.

A gendarme came up the footpath, passed behind us, and went on. It seemed strange, but perhaps he was a town gendarme. We followed him up and around the bend, where we discovered another Treignac, the high, modern town, whence we looked across the old from terraces, as one may look across Rome from the Pincio. And this new town had the modern Roman pretension, the Roman dust. We asked a gendarme, though not the one of a few minutes ago, where there was an hotel, and he said, scornfully, pointing: "*There*, straight in front of you"—so we went to it, and met the patron outside the door.

He interviewed us in public and we did not like him, neither did we like a garçon of the hotel who put down the buckets he was carrying to stare at us the better, insolently and openly, while the interview lasted. But we gave him a look of rebuke and question that caused him to depart in hurried confusion, and we marked him as a person who would not receive a tip in the morning. The atmosphere of this hotel was abrupt, impolite, and when we were given a very small room with only one bed, we decided that we did not like the place at all.

Your request for hot water struck me as a sensible and original idea, and I amplified your order, asking for a whole lot of hot water. It came in a large enamel pitcher, and you left me free to perform my ceremonies first. Then I busied myself with my pack. When I looked up I received the most startling shock of the journey. You were shaving! And every line of your body said to me: "There is to be no word of comment on this operation!" In a savage, determined way you attacked the black growth of the last nine days, and in an astonishingly short time the beard was no more. I offered up silent thanks, and pondered "*The Shaving of Shagpat.*"

We went out, ignoring the Pincian Treignac, and descended the steepest cobbled streets in France, to the old town. We went into the church, talking in ordinary conversational tones but in an instant we caught our breath and were silent. The church was dark as night inside, and we had disturbed a few people who were at their devotions. We felt their presence rather than saw them, and we felt most strongly their rebuke to our noisy intrusion. We hastened out.

Down on the little stone bridge at the bottom we stayed for a long time, watching the water flow over the stones, listening to it. And it was nearly dark when we climbed up the cobbled street to the "Pincio."

The impolite hotel had a dining room in which there were too many dusty ornaments and shiny wooden chairs. The insolent garçon came and tended the lamps and noisily closed the shutters over the door and windows that faced the terrasse. But the meal they served caused us to forgive them all their shortcomings. There were bottles of both red and white wine of good quality on every table, and the dishes came hot and promptly from the kitchen. The climax of that dinner was a dish of mountain trout from the brawling Vézère, perfectly cooked, utterly delicious, and in what splendid tone were our bodies at Treignac, for the enjoyment of any physical pleasure! Fish like that should be offered only to a palate that will appreciate the finest shades of delicacy, in flavour, texture, consistency; only to nostrils keen to detect the faintest nuance of odour. Those little fish most admirably fulfilled their destiny.

We stayed at the table overlong, and retired thence to our room, where we leaned out of the window. There was a small public spring on the bank outside. We talked there of the happy monotony of the last three or four days, and I think we agreed, should anyone ask us where he should go to spend a peaceful holiday in the mountains, that we could tell him without hesitation to go to Glénic, Eymoutiers, or Treignac.

And we were unaware, that night, that our "*Mountain Interval*" was over.

GASCON MIDI

XII

WHERE THE SOUTH BEGINS

In the morning there was a light rain drizzling, and you complained that the noise of the spring outside the window had kept you awake. (Uneasy sleeps the head that shaves a beard!) Long marches were to start again, and we must be early on the road. It was imperative, too, that my boots be repaired at Treignac. No, things did not look promising.

We found a cobbler, in a blind burrow on the way into the old town, a dark, damp little shop where worked a man of skill. He made stout repairs while we waited, protesting that they could only be temporary, done in such a hurry. That was pride in the job; the artizan; the old guild spirit. How quickly, surely, effectively that man worked! hammering or slicing his damp leather, finishing off the work by scraping the rough edges with a piece of glass. And he charged three francs, about fourpence halfpenny.

I watched him with fascination and a sense of inferiority, this person who had so thoroughly mastered a handicraft, who had moulded his life and his body to the making and repairing of footwear; this man who had no inferiors among cobblers.

I have mastered nothing. I have been a dreamer, a mineralogist, chemist, geologist, soldier, geographer, traveller, writer, amateur musician and linguist, and a dilettante in other things. But I have done nothing thoroughly. Where is the difference? This man wants to make a living, this cobbler, to live like the other men he knows. A living must be earned, and to earn it he must learn to do something that people want done, and he must do it properly. So he concentrates on boots.

It is quite simple, given the concentration. But I am a *dreamer* first. I think about everything in life, and I find many sides of life intensely interesting. I want to know about them and I go and sample them. I have learnt things, and by some of them have earned a living, though I did not learn them just for that. I could be an anthropologist, a zoologist, navigator, historian, many other things, but they are so intensely interesting that I fear to be involved in them—they would capture me for a while. I watch a bootmaker, a carpenter, and I know with certainty that I could be a good bootmaker or carpenter, for there are no hard mysteries in these things, though there is knack, which I can only master by painful application. You know, for instance, that I will not take the trouble to learn how to sharpen a razor properly. But I am not interested in bootmaking or carpentry; I merely admire them as excellent crafts with limited possibilities, ending in top boots and wooden churches.

The other things have unlimited possibilities. But I could master nearly all of them, one at a time, and so lose the others. Nearly all of them, for some demand a strong body and mine is a defective body; others demand a brain that is a different kind of brain from mine. I could not become a simple calculator for I make mistakes. Nor could I be a physicist, a sculptor, nor master of any kind of plastic art, nor a composer of music. Nevertheless, the space open to me is enormous and I want to explore it all. To the bootmaker it would be just space, and it would bore him.

And you are like me, because you are a dreamer first. But there are useful, limited things that you have mastered, and a limitless thing that you pursue steadily and without swerving. Why are there these differences? And why should I feel inferiority in the presence of the cobbler, shamed by his instinctive skill? I was glad when the repairs were finished.

The light rain had ceased falling and the morning was dull and cool. We had not gone far from Treignac, and were climbing a road that curved around a long hill. Down the road came two gendarmes leading their splendid horses. Damnation! Of course they would stop us. They did.

After a few politely worded enquiries about our nationalities and the object of our journey, they drifted into a most friendly conversation, without even asking for our cartes d'identité! Australia interested one of them, for he had seen something of the Australian troops during the War and could not express his admiration for them strongly enough, and to find that I had *fait la guerre* put us on that footing of understanding that is beyond understanding, that exists only between those who bore arms in the War. The talk became a general one, about inter-allied debts, waste of government money on reconstruction in the devastated zone, and the sorry condition of France. These men expressed the single-minded patriotism of their country as well as any Frenchmen I have met, and they sincerely wanted to know how their country appeared to two foreigners.

It was a kind of conversation that always forces me to insincerity in France, for their country, these days, appears to me to be selfish, short sighted, in some ways unreliable, and to say so is to provoke an insoluble debate on their philosophy of national existence. Fortunately, I have seen France in action, which is more admirable than to see France temporising, and I know the courage, reliability, and tenacity of men like these gendarmes. It saves me from too hasty and sweeping a judgment.

Luckily, we found some points of agreement, and the larger issue was delicately avoided. The talk would have been enjoyable had we not a long march ahead of us; had the rain not started again; had we, in other words, been willing to be delayed. They shook hands with us when they said good-bye, wishing us very good luck, and I think we can record here, Max, that the gendarmes we met in the Massif Central were more agreeable, though no less earnest in the discharge of their duty, than other gendarmes.

We set off again, and there was rain, rain, an intermittent drizzle, and the road went for miles over the rolling, grassy upland. At one point we looked back, and saw the low humps of the Monts de Monedières, the mountains that lie just east of Treignac, the highest part of the Massif Central we were to be near, and we knew from them that we must now be going down, out of the mountains.

A few of the branch roads had no signposts, a most unusual thing for France, and we missed our proper turn-off. But everywhere in France there is another way round, and we merely went on to the next road that would do. We crossed nameless brooks, and we found no shelter, but we amused ourselves by discussing the probable aspect of France as seen from high up in the sky, should the land be stripped of everything, houses, roads, towns, forests; everything but the signposts. We agreed that France would then appear to be covered evenly with an open growth of young saplings, so numerous are the signposts in this labelled and ticketed country.

The alternative road wound through groves of chestnuts. They were something new to us, and we found that it is incorrect to speak of forests of chestnuts, real chestnuts that provide the cities with roasted nuts in Winter, for the trees are planted far apart, are open in character, and in very early Spring before they have come into leaf it is possible to look at a whole brown hillside that is covered with chestnuts and not to realise that there is a tree there, until the eyes have gained wisdom. Later, one comes to look at far hillsides and say, as if by instinct, "A grove of chestnuts."

But it was raining hard along this gentle, winding road, and at one turning we came upon three old women. With their hoisted skirts, their round umbrellas, their fussy choice of a way through the mud, they were like three black hens clucking over worms in a yard. But they returned a greeting pleasantly enough.

By the time we reached the next crossroads the rain had ceased, we were again on the road we had intended to follow, and we decided that it was time for lunch. We went south again, but there were only a few, isolated houses. The map indicated a place called Jarenne, at a junction road, but Jarenne, when we got to it, consisted only of three houses.

We spoke to a man who was standing beside the road and asked him where, in the neighbourhood, we could get some lunch, for the map showed unpromising miles around us. "Why," said the man, pointing to one of the houses, "over there, at the restaurant." And he took us to the door and presented us to Madame. She gave him a very black look, an accusing look, that asked plainly—

"You stupid idiot, what did you bring them here for?"

But Madame knew that she was trapped, for we had been properly introduced by a native. She took us into a white-washed room where there were a bare wooden table and benches, and on the walls a few depressing advertisements, but our packs and wet coats had to be left in the outer room, the kitchen. In a subtle manner she gave us to understand that our presence was inconvenient and undesirable, and she left us to wait there. Presently a maid came in and asked quite rudely:—

"What do you want to eat?"

The conversation took the following form: "We will eat whatever you can provide. We don't wish to have an elaborate meal prepared. What can you give us?"

"That depends on what you want."

"Yes, but what have you?"

"Eggs."

"Then, you could make an omelette?"

"Yes."

"All right, an omelette for two. Have you any milk?"

"Whatever do you want milk for?"

"*Have* you any milk?"

"Yes."

"Then milk for one person, and wine for one. Have you cheese?"

"No."

"Then what else is there?"

"Bread."

"No butter?"

"No."

"Any meat?"

"No."

"All right then. Bread, milk, wine, and an omelette."

Evidently, it was to be a lean meal. The things came in one by one, and the girl slammed them on to the table as forcibly as they would safely allow, departing after each visit without a word. We looked at the bread and found it almost too stale to eat. When she came in again we asked: "Will you please bring us some fresher bread than that? It's too stale."

"There's no other bread," answered the girl—this in the country in France, where the making of bread is a proud art of the household!

"But, surely you must have baked again since that was made?"

"There's *no* other bread," repeated the girl emphatically, and went out.

Presently she came in with the omelette, watched us in disdainful silence as we began the meal, and made no acknowledgment of our "Merci, Mademoiselle." She went out again, to return in five minutes with a plate. She shoved it across the table and said :—

"There!" and left us.

On the plate were some scraps of cold chicken, tough, unpalatable. We did our best with them, but the edible parts of that chicken had already gone elsewhere, several days before.

When we had finished we went into the kitchen to get our things and pay the bill. Madame, the girl and three men were there, all sitting at the table having lunch, a lunch from which nothing that country people usually eat was lacking. And prominent on the table were several loaves and many slices of fresh bread! In an open bin by the wall were many loaves of fresh bread! We looked at the bread and looked at them, but not an eyelid flickered. We looked at each other, and again at them, but they returned the look with a satisfied audacity—they had shown the foreigners what they thought of them, and the foreigners would have to pay, just the same.

On the table, and still coming from the stove, were some great, circular pancakes of a kind I had never seen before. I made up my mind that I would at least sample those pancakes, and launched the attack at Madame's pride. How fine they looked, I said, how light for their size. What were they? I had never seen that kind of pancake before. What were they called? Madame expanded. They were local, she said, and she told me their name, which I have forgotten. Of course Monsieur had not seen them before, as Monsieur was *not* local. Would Monsieur like to try them? Monsieur would, and did, and found them less interesting than they looked. Moreover, he felt that the other Monsieur, who was behind him, would presently kick him if he delayed among these mean people.

But the interlude created openings, fortunate and unfortunate. It enabled us to pay Madame eleven francs for a lunch that was worth five. And it enabled one of the men to voice his burning curiosity. Pointing to our packs he said, with the air of a person who can't be hoodwinked: "Vous vendez quelque chose?"

French is a powerful language in the mouth of a Frenchman. What he really said so easily was not "Are you selling something?" but "You are selling something, aren't you? You can't tell me you're not. Open it up and let me have a look at it, and explain all about it."

We gave him a curt "Non!" for we owed little courtesy here. We turned our backs on the company and walked out, careful to say bon jour, and not au revoir. And this place, this house at Jarenne, announces by a sign on the front that it is a "Restaurant," a kind of place that is supposed to be one where the general public can obtain meals!

We put Jarenne rapidly behind us.

Our road followed the crest of a ridge between two little rivers that flowed parallel, in nearly straight courses due south, less than two kilometres apart. It was pretty country, rather open, with good views, and on the far side of the western valley were many chestnuts. At a halt, where we sat on a damp bank under a hedge, a workman in brown stopped for the sake of a yarn, and accepted a cigarette. He complained sorrowfully about the soaring price of tobacco, for the State monopoly was at that time constantly increasing the retail prices to bring them into line with the international exchange on the franc.

Now, the value of the franc in the country districts was considerably more than on the exchanges of Paris, London, and New York, for the remote rural districts were not registering the minor fluctuations at all. This fellow was a good example of how the French peasant was made to feel the changing value of French money at the time. He had got used to the prices of things like bread and wine, which remained steadily at about five or six times their prewar value in francs, but when the price of cigarettes, which was fixed in Paris for the whole country, changed over night, his pocket was seriously affected.

He had many things to complain of, this workman. He was a farm labourer, paid, he said, three thousand francs a year, which at that time was equal to about twenty pounds, a hundred dollars, and, although the real value of the sum was considerably more than that to him, it was a miserably small amount. It would not be so bad, he said, if anybody cared, but he and many others around there were working for absentee landlords, and it was thus difficult to bring about any improvement. We offered him another cigarette and moved on.

At a very small village called Plumasel there were thatched cottages, English cottages, and many hedges. A little dog here wanted to join the expedition to Spain, and took to the open fields when his mistress tried to catch him. We gave help but it was no use, and as we went around a bend we still heard her calling the dog. I forget its name, but all dogs belonging to women in France are called "*Kiki*" or "*Fifi*," or something equally disgusting.

Rain came on again, and at one place, where the windings of the road do not show on the map, we sheltered in a hollow tree. There were purplish-red orchids resembling hyacinths, here, and we were still among chestnuts. Moreover, this curious country produced another exhibit, hedges of trimmed quince trees in bloom. Further on, there was much cutting of timber and we noticed that on the steeper slopes of the valley side the trees were cut so that they would fall towards the stream. Another sudden shower drove us to the poor shelter of a stack of timber, branches of pine and birch, and our systematic habit of resting seemed to be getting very disorganised. We followed down the spur between the streams into a valley where they joined with a third stream, and at last the afternoon began to clear and the sun came out to stay for the rest of the day. But the part of the map that was exposed still bears the traces of that rainiest of days in France.

The stream we were following did not go far before it joined the river Corrèze. The valley became very deep and the tops of the hills appeared to be flat. At the corner of an elbow in the valley we could see the opposed bend of a main road right on the edge of the flat top of the western slope. At a place called les Angles there is a low bridge across the river, uniting three roadways, one transverse to the valley, the others along it, and opposite the bridge was a solitary hotel in front of which were a couple of automobiles. From a distance of a hundred yards it all looked very civilised to us, like the beginning of a town, but there was nothing else around the bend. While we were resting not far from les Angles a procession of people, in perhaps twelve small carts drawn by mules, passed, going north. It was like the Easter procession to Châteaumeillant, but these people seemed to be returning home from town, and they accepted our greetings more politely than the people of the Easter procession.

By the time we reached our next halt the valley had opened out and the gradient of descent was much gentler than it had been—the river was flowing more quietly. We were seated on the grass in a very green place, and after that lunch at Jarenne we were hungry. All at once, you remembered the cakes we had bought at Lacelle, and we ate them thankfully. As I remember them, they tasted like sawdust, but perhaps it is only due to association of ideas, for, over our right shoulders, about two hundred yards away among some trees, there was a traction engine noisily at work sawing timber, and some people were busy about a green, Gipsy van. But, as I have never eaten sawdust, it must be due entirely to imagination.

Below here the Corrèze became almost deliberate in its flow, but there were short, low rapids between the pools. The valley was very open and grassy and we passed by a beautiful villa, or château, in quite a small park. It was a low, spreading building, like an English country house, and we decided to what use we would put each room were it ours. Châteaux had been absent from the scenery for days, the last being the one where they give milk to tourists but will not even sell it to plain human beings, away back beyond the Petite Creuse.

We had to make a wide sweeping curve around the meadows before we turned into the next bend of the valley. But around that bend the aspect and atmosphere of things changed. The valley was narrower, and became still narrower downstream, and there were woods along the river that gave an indefinable suggestion of promenades, of people who come out walking on Sunday afternoons —tidy woods; reserved woods. The road surface, too, seemed better, and the river, where we could see it, was very still. Soon we met a couple of cyclists, not dressed like country people; next, two bicycles by the road, and a boy and girl under the trees, not difficult to discover; then, a well-dressed girl, cycling slowly, and, as we watched her, we concluded that she was a sentinel for the other two.

It meant that we were nearly at Tulle. We encountered Tulle all at once, in the forms of a weir, a stone wall by the road, and the first houses. The wall was right above the river, an excellent place whereon to sit, so we sat, to watch the girl cyclist and anybody else who passed by.

Tulle is a place about as big as Guéret, departmental capital also, and the rest of it was around the bend. We had made a long march and wanted to find an hotel, so we walked into town, remarking only two things; that Tulle was unlike any French town we had seen, though we could not say why; and that a gendarme came out of the Gendarmerie soon after we passed, and was looking fixedly at us with an interest that seemed excessive. We chose the first bridge we saw, and put the river and two rows of trees between him and us. The move brought us opposite a likely-looking hotel, and we went inside.

Madame had a room, yes. It overlooked a back street, was very dusty, and contained two red-covered beds that were not opulent in appearance. We removed the travel stains, to the great interest of a thin, inquisitive woman in the opposite house. She had goldfish in a bowl on the window sill, and every time we looked across there quickly she was peeping, but we didn't take off enough to make it worth her while.

The back street itself was interesting for it had an air of belonging to the sixteenth century, and there was a group of little girls below our window playing a curious ball game. They threw the ball up, or against the wall, and had to make quaint evolutions and sing verses before catching it as it fell or rebounded, and the movements, the verses, became more complicated and longer at each throw, until the feat was impossible, and the little girl was "out." We have both seen a similar game played by tapping the ball with a tambourine, at le Havre, n'est ce pas?

We went into the town to find out why it was different. It is an old town that has grown with the times, remaining alive, like Bourges. The valley is narrow, and the business section of the town is strung out along the river, but the steep valley sides are covered with buildings, and on the flat hilltops are the institutions, hospitals, barracks, and the like. The heart of Tulle has large and imposing public buildings, banks and offices, many of them not very old, and there is a large, ancient church that is neither beautiful nor offensive. The shops are good, and Tulle makes things, soda water, lemonade, citrous apéritifs. Altogether, it is quietly busy, and has been able to remain a picturesque place.

We sought carefully for the difference, and you found it. The houses were light blue, blue-grey, green-grey, high and narrow, with running balconies of iron and slender iron pillars to support them; and there was wistaria trailing on some of these balconies! Gone, the sad tones, the severe, precipitous fronts, the forbidding wooden shutters of France. People here looked out of open windows, sat on balconies. It was French yet not French. French in the high, narrow proportions of things, doors, windows, like the tall, narrow letters in nineteenth century French books. But not French in its openness. That was the difference.

We thought there should be a teashop here, and looked for one in many streets. We found that Tulle had the customary garrison of soldiers, but no teashop, so we went into a café on an important street by the river, and asked for tea. They were able to provide it. The café was large and well-appointed, and for a moment it felt like Paris. But again, you found the difference. Where was the glitter, the polish on glass and marble and brass, the clean mellowness of wood and leather that are found in a good Parisian café? This was too frowsy, a provincial imitation.

Dinner that night was a simple meal served by the old lady herself. It started with vermicelli soup and ended plainly, but was wholesome enough. While we ate it the asthmatic old patron took great trouble in making out the fiches, which seemed to be his only duty. There was a sink behind us, and the old man kept staggering over to it to clear his throat during the meal, which nearly deprived me of my appetite, but they seemed to be a pathetic old couple, without any assistance in their business, and they entertained us with one of those graveyard conversations that are so common among simple old people. Only one other person dined, a youngish man, and we seemed to be the only lodgers in the big, rambling building that night.

We wondered how this old pair could possibly make a living, if the conditions we observed were the usual ones. We remembered many other little places too, where it seemed the same—a family existing on the meagre sale of a few cheap drinks; a restaurant that seemed to have no customers. Often, a business of this nature is combined with some other occupation, the man working elsewhere in town, his wife managing the bistro. But that was not the case here, unless there were invisible sons. And it made us marvel all the more at those hotels and restaurants that found it too much trouble to be bothered with us; that could afford to turn us away.

After we went to bed I pondered over these differences of the day, the difference of Tulle. It seemed to have something to do with Limoges. Where had we lost Limoges? Between Eymoutiers and Treignac, it seemed, where we left the drainage basin of the Vienne—the Loire, and entered that of the Vézère—the Dordogne—the Gironde! It came like a great light in my mind. We were in the South of France! Where everything is different!

The divide between the Vienne and the Vézère is not only a barrier that shuts Limoges off from Treignac. It is the crest of the Massif Central, dividing the rivers of the Loire from those of the Gironde and Garonne—the frontier of the South of France. For hours, then, we had been in the Midi—the South. No wonder it was different. What were the main differences? Tulle: it makes apéritifs (though most of them are made on the Riviera); it has wistaria; it opens its windows, and believes in light, happy colour. Vermicelli soup! Chestnuts; hedges of quince in bloom; Treignac—of course, Treign*ac*. A southern name. Wasn't the map here sprinkled with the southern *ac's*? To be sure, there are *ac's* in Brittany, but it is a southern termination. Who hasn't heard of Cognac?

I would like to write a dissertation on southern place names and the sonorous names of southern rivers—Dordogne, Gironde, Corrèze, Tarn, Aude; glorious words. And the names of towns, how different they look, and sound, from the northern names. Compare Aurillac, Padirac, Bergerac, with Boissy-la-Rivière, St. Cyr-la-Rivière, to choose only the *ac's* and the *Rivières*. The fire, the colour-charm, is in the South.

But just where had this South begun for us? The first southern brook was the Soudhene—women gossiping on a stone wall; a dam; the river hardly noticed. And further back, at Lacelle, there was a fretted belfry, a sign that we were not to recognise for many days yet. Yes, I would break it all to you in the morning.

The next day we greased our boots before starting. The day was fine, but the air felt dewy. We thought that we would be out of Tulle when we reached the far bend, but at the bend we found that the town of Tulle sends out three legs into different valleys, like the "arms" of the Isle of Man. And at the bend, too, was a great white signboard, that said in bold, black letters "To Bordeaux." I broke the news.

"Max, behold! We're in the South of France."

It was quite intoxicating, and we both held our breath for a moment.

But we had no desire to go to Bordeaux yet, so we followed the third leg of Tulle to the railway station. Oh, what a long way is that railway station from the banks and shops of Tulle! But the town is a place where four tortuous streams unite, and these four streams have gathered the waters of sixteen lesser streams. And directly into Tulle come at least fifteen roads, plunging in zig-zags from the tops of the ridges, and winding in from the valleys. And from four directions come railways. And because Tulle found in olden time that there is safety in a narrow glen, it all means that there is a confusion of twisting and wriggling for things that would go there or leave there now.

We were confused at the railway station. With a view to disarming them we approached a group of three gendarmes, and asked them how people find the great south road that leads from Tulle. They told us politely that people go a mile up the valley, cross the river, come back on the other side, and climb up the hill nearly opposite the railway station. We thanked them, and went and bought some bright oranges, another thing that can be casually done in Tulle. Then we did as the gendarmes had instructed us, and found that it cannot be otherwise, the trace of this great south road from Tulle.

We were very gay that morning, and I inveigled you into a long talk about your early life, your schooldays, your family, cousins, friends, the disgraceful doings of your youth, and was thus able to fill in a great deal of the *arrière portrait* that always means much to me if I am to know my friends.

It was all so entertaining that before we knew it we were at Ste. Fortunade, one of those long, narrow towns that stretch for a mile along the road, and this one, it seems, named after a lady saint—most unusual. In the middle of the town a girl darted through a doorway and roused the whole family out to watch us passing. At the far end we realised that we had climbed to the top of the Massif and we wanted a drink.

We went into a café, almost the end house of Ste. Fortunade, and found (*a*) a baby; (*b*) Indian corn; (*c*) a funeral feast prepared. But we were told we were welcome, and were served with wine in the feast chamber. (*a*) Was adorable and cooed. (*b*) Interested you naturally as a Texan; was stored on the cob, on ledges and in crannies of the kitchen; was said to be locally grown; and you pronounce it to be poor. You should know. But the colour was beautiful. Doesn't the colour count—that rich orange-red? As for (*c*), the silent, black-clad mourners began to arrive, old persons with umbrellas, prepared for rain, so we chucked the very live baby under the chin, paid the bill of one franc, and went. But streaming towards us were mourners, all prepared for rain. And it did rain again, though not for long.

We rested near a place with the happy name of Majounie, which was on the edge of the world, for beyond its farmlike prettiness were the barrens. There were poor woods on sandy soil, and the country became steadily poorer, opener, the vegetation more and more stunted. Before it got too open we made an arrêt de nécessité in the woods, and found, to our surprise, well-worn cart tracks running in many directions, an unexplained mystery.

The open barrens with their little bushes felt high, and at last we were getting long views over the sinking flank of the Massif. But the country was dull. We had marked as our lunch place a cluster of three villages close together, la Brande, la Bauverie, and Puy-de-Noix. We felt that we must be getting near them, and at the next halt, where we sat on short, close grass like the grass of the windy seaside, I studied the map carefully. We *were* there! They were farms, not villages, and we could see them all. The barren land stretched for miles, according to the map and the "feel" of the country. It would be hours before we would arrive at a place with shops, and, as for trying private places—we had learnt not to. And these seemed very poor.

We were in the South, we could see away over it, the South where there are oranges and Indian corn. But, as it was in the beginning, yesterday, things did not look promising. The South had greeted us with rain.

XIII

GO TO THE GOUFFRE DE PADIRAC!

We were a desolate pair as we walked on over the barrens, for there seemed to be no likelihood of getting anything to eat at a reasonable hour, and two or three oranges are not enough to sustain two healthy explorers. Technically we were still in the Massif Central, for the high hills rise here to about sixteen hundred feet. We thought that we would be in the Massif for the rest of the day and perhaps to-morrow, but with low mountains that are surrounded by hills it is difficult to say when you leave the mountains and enter the hills. The chief thing that mattered to us was that we were in the South of France, and we cared little whether it were called the Massif Central or something else. And we didn't even care about the South of France much at that time.

We were hungry. Arrangements had failed to work. Foresight had proved to be inefficient.

Our map said that we should soon come to a crossroads where there was a place called Leix that promised to be no different from the three places that were not villages. We went over a hill and down around a curve of the road, and there before us was Leix, a prosperous settlement! It called itself not Leix, but les Quatre-Chemins, and it was a secret, unknown to the makers of maps. All our depression evaporated, for at this place there were three hotels, and outside one of them was an automobile. Here there would certainly be plenty of lunch, and we would have it at an hotel—at the most modest of the three.

The choice was easy, and we went into the small place beside the road that came from the east. We were given quite an enthusiastic welcome by two dogs, a child, two young women, and an old woman. They surrounded us and all talked at once, but they were very nice people. They said yes, that of course they could give us lunch, a light lunch, or an abundant one, just as we wished. It would be a pleasure, and would we please come into the dining room?

Then they did a very pretty thing. They left us solely in the hands of one of the girls, a most attractive girl, and the rest of the party withdrew. Only the dogs came back, full of trust in our generosity, and we rewarded them for the compliment. But the old woman accused them of bad manners and chased them out more than once. When they understood that they were not to come into the dining room they went outside, and so did the child with whom they played. But the three individuals, dogs and child, were never of one mind. A dog would come in; the child would follow it; and presently in would come the other dog, each one looking towards us in passing, as if to say "May I come and listen—just a little while?" Then a dog would go out again and the child and the other dog would soon follow. They all wanted to do the same things but they couldn't make up their minds about where to play, and the old woman kept telling them to stay inside or outside, but whichever it was to be, stay there! Yet she opened and closed the door for them patiently whenever they wanted it.

The girl talked all the time she was preparing the lunch, and what a fine, handsome girl she was! Fair, delicately coloured, with bright, intelligent eyes, an expression of lively interest, and a splendid figure. It is not right to say that *she* talked, for we all talked, an easy, natural conversation that ran most gaily, as among old friends, for the girl understood us and what we were doing—understood, and wanted this adventure of ours to bring us all the joy that she knew could be in it. She was absolutely without fear of us, and would bend over confidently, giving such eager glances of understanding, her eyes asking with such enthusiasm for more, as we told her where we had been, what we had done, where we were going, that she repeatedly ran the risk of being kissed with ardour.

She was not a waitress; she was a playmate during that hour. Like Madame Amélie Martin, she wished to know all about the world, but she had, too, an insatiable curiosity about life, a kind of inner compulsion that urged her towards experience. She must have been fairly well educated, for she spoke excellent French, whereas the other members of the household spoke patois. And she had travelled a little, in Alsace; had made a long automobile tour there; had even done a little mountaineering. She gave us a lively and amusing account of an ascent she made of the Ballon d'Alsace with several other girls in bad weather "like you must have found it this morning and yesterday, Messieurs," but it had been much worse. They were caught in a fog, slept in a mountain hut, and saw nothing when they reached the summit. But that mattered little, really, for they had performed the feat they had set out to perform; in spite of rain, fog, of losing their way, and in the end seeing nothing, they had climbed a mountain, and were satisfied.

All this time we were eating lunch. There were an omelette, meat, fresh bread, butter, milk, and wine. And they insisted that we try the home-made preserves. A *pâté maison* was brought in, and had as good a flavour as any *pâté de campagne* I have ever sampled. And there was a jar of plum conserve that made a satisfying dessert. Our opinion, or rather, our praise, was wanted in judgment of these home-made things, and the girl's eyes sparkled with pleasure, for she knew that we meant it when we said that they were good.

You often sent me amused, eloquent glances while we were talking. The girl indeed addressed most of her remarks to me, which was natural, as my French is much more fluent than yours, but she always included us both, I thought. Nevertheless, you looked like a person conferring a benediction, and I admit that I was enjoying myself immensely and could have talked to that girl all day. And, will I say it? I think she would have liked it too.

She was keen for us to miss nothing that might be seen on our journey. She knew the countryside well, knew also the route we were taking. "Messieurs," she said, "go to the Gouffre de Padirac! You musn't miss the Gouffre de Padirac." We asked about it. The Gouffre, she explained, was a little off our road, but not far, and we *must* go there. One went into a great hole in the earth, and descended by ladders a hundred, two hundred metres into a tremendous cavern like a cathedral, and it was wonderful, wonderful. It gave a thrill, for she had been there and would never forget it. Nobody coming to this part of the country should leave without seeing the Gouffre de Padirac.

And there was another thing. Just close at hand, right by the road, was the Rocher de Vic, and we must go there. It was an ancient Roman camp on the top of a hill, and many objects, antiquities, had been found there, and the old *fossa* could still be traced. But it was for the view that we must go there, the magnificent view.

We had to tear ourselves away from this sweet, enthusiastic girl, but our bed for the night was many miles distant, and it was afternoon. She came out and showed us where to leave the road for the Rocher. We said good-bye joyously, as friends, which is to say a good deal; but we knew that there had been an exchange of things worth having, here. We had received and bestowed a radiance that lives long in the mind. And there were uttered no foolish regrets, no insincere hopes that we might meet each other again. Interest had been created, interest that would last, and I know that that girl often remembers us and feels happy, as we do her. Nor does she believe that we will ever reappear. We were persons who came and understood, accepted and gave. The brief relation was complete, and will remain always a joy. To her it is the same.

We went to the Rocher de Vic, and we looked out across the land through the eyes of the girl. It was indeed magnificent. A rocky hill, the highest point on the open barrens, and it seemed to dominate the world. Crowning it was a great figure of the Blessèd Virgin, gazing eastward, not a beautiful thing, but a crudely splendid conception, rightly placed, a figure that belonged to the high wind-swept barrens. At the foot of the pedestal was a boy of about ten, busy making a wooden flute, and he took no more heed of us than did the figure of the Virgin; a shepherd boy with a black dog, his sheep nibbling the gorse lower down the hillside.

To the east we could see, across the deep trenches of the Souvigne and the Dordogne, the high volcanic mountains of the Cantal, fifty miles away. To the south was again the trench of the Dordogne, and the rolling South of France. Westward were hills, and hills beyond them. To the north were the round humps of the Monts de Monedières at Treignac. Open world and open sky and we above it all. Nowhere else in France have I seen so far, so openly. Not in Picardy, nor the Gâtinais, nor where we were again to see the whole world, was there the universal sweep of this boundless freedom for the eyes, across the spreading land extended.

We went down from the gorse-covered barrens, on the southward road, into the green country of the quince and the cherry, where the cherry trees were bridal as the birches had been virginal at Eymoutiers. When we had regained a careless composure you teased me about the girl of les Quatre-Chemins, as you have often teased me since. You said that I had allowed a joyous opportunity to escape. That the girl's eagerness, her ardour, vitality, were warm gifts that she was offering frankly to me, only to me. That it was almost my duty to have chosen les Quatre-Chemins as the place where we would stay for the night, and it amused you to think that I had not even considered such an idea as changing our plans.

But I do not believe you. For there were enchantments in the world that day, and neither les Quatre-Chemins nor the laughing, friendly girl really exist. The place is not on the map, for the map shows what the sure, matter-of-fact people know to exist, and nothing that does not exist. That place, and that girl, were enchantments, conjured up for us by the strange powers of joy that were with us on this journey. Enchantments that were real, delightfully real, only as long as we stayed with them, and real to us alone, to nobody else in the world. Had I kissed that bright girl as I wanted to kiss her; had I placed my hand on her warm, firm body, she would have disappeared instantly: the *pâté maison* would have evaporated; the dogs would have sunk moaning into the ground; the child would have floated back to Heaven; the old woman and the other young woman would have disappeared up the chimney on broomsticks. There would have been left only Leix. Were you or I to go there again, we would find not les Quatre-Chemins, but Leix, which is nothing but a farmhouse, as the map, and the sensible men who made the map, will tell you.

Lostanges is in the green valley of a brook, the Sourdoire, and in the valley is a railway. We sat down by a hedge near Lostanges and ate the oranges we had brought from Tulle. You complained that your foot was hurting, and painfully we removed the boot. What you called the "leader," the Achilles tendon, was exceedingly sore, and we applied certain tricks of massage that we had used before, at the end of the day, to relieve tight muscles.

We went slowly down the valley, for your foot was in great pain and you hobbled with difficulty. The railway turned off to the left, and the valley became gentle and rich, like the Flemish country, but the gentleness helped you very little. We sat down in long, sweet-smelling grass, where the air was filled with country odours of mown hay and cattle. An old man who was minding a cow came discreetly into the angle of a hedge to observe us, as he thought, unobserved. A man and woman were trying vainly to get a waggon loaded with a great, overhanging mass of shaggy hay out through a narrow lane between hedges on to the road. They looked repeatedly at us, but we didn't regard the difficulty as any affair of ours—we were too tired, and your foot must rest. And you were indeed able to walk more easily when we moved again.

The soil was a rich chocolate brown along this valley, and to the south-east was a round knob of a mountain that kept persistently in view, persistently the same. We were going slowly, talking little, but we did wonder why there was no castle on the round mountain. I was thinking that the hard rocks of the Massif Central must have been covered here by soft shales, and soon I noticed a band of sandstone in the hillside. At one place it had been cut, blasted to make way for the road, and near here was a place where the band had been naturally broken across by a fissure, and on one side of the fissure it had sagged, dropped downward many feet. It was interrupted.

It astonished me to find THE PROFESSOR beside us. He looked so natural, as if he had been with us for miles; but you seemed not to notice him at all, yet the Professor was talking!

"That young woman, Aurousseau," he was saying, "you remember her? The last time I was able to speak to you, you know. She was very masterful. I felt, really, that it was useless to stay. I was not *afraid* of her, not really afraid at all. But there are times when one must defer. I didn't intend to leave it so long before I saw you—er, that young woman is not likely to come here *now*, I hope? . . . Ah; then we may talk?"

I looked questioningly at him, but said nothing. The Professor became a little confused, and continued hurriedly: "I don't wish to intrude—if it is of the slightest inconvenience—but, this sandstone: your opinion would be so valuable to us. Do you think it is faulted?" I merely nodded, but the Professor wanted more.

"Downthrow faulting, tensional, do you think?"

"Yes!" I shouted, "*Downthrow* faulting, *tensional*, plain as a pikestaff!"

He looked very startled, very puzzled, and was jamming his notebook into a pocket, like a man who has just remembered something with a shock.

The next time I looked over at the little round mountain he was up there, hammering chips and lumps off the top of it as hard as he could.

"A great man, that," I murmured to myself. "Perhaps the only great man I have ever known. It hurts me to disappoint him but I shall never be what he hoped—can follow him no longer."

"Who's a great man?" you asked.

"Mind your own business!" I replied.

Curemonte was an astonishing village that looked ages old, built along the narrow crest of a ridge, high above the road, inaccessible except from the southern end where a narrow side road led up the spur and into the village. A place that could almost defy attack; a real hill town.

Not far from Curemonte is la Chapelle-aux-Saints, where the road crosses the river, a small, muddy place with a fat little church and no hotel. The valley was changing here, getting swampy, and the landscape was growing untidy. There were brakes and thickets of slender, streaky young trees, and in place of green freshness there came a kind of curling brown rot over things, at once a dry deadness and a muddy sluggishness. And your foot became troublesome again.

We loitered, you very painfully, in the growing dusk. It would be over an hour before we should get to Vayrac, if you could endure the walking. I would gladly have stopped anywhere that afternoon, but our plan said Vayrac, and I know too well your determination not to be defeated by circumstances. It seemed better to let any suggestion that we stop before Vayrac come from you. But would we ever get there? All at once, I knew that we would get there.

I heard something hit smartly on stone, on a milestone we had just passed (kilometre stone, of course, but I must call them milestones), and a light, gay laugh came teasingly from the bushes. A hand waved towards us, and I saw him, recognised him—quite a well-known deity, the sprite who shoots the digits off the milestones, and makes them one less than on the last one you saw.

It is not common knowledge, but milestones are turned out in bulk from the factories. When orders are placed for a particular road, the inscriptions are naturally all the same, but the numbers would give an immense amount of trouble if they were all stamped at the factories. So, for all roads less than a hundred miles long the stones are cast in batches, only one number appearing on each batch; batches of blanks, of 1's, 2's, 3's, and so on, up to 0's. For longer roads it is not quite so simple but the system is the same. The stones are placed along the road so that the numbers would be in order, if they were completed, but there are no numbers at all on the first nine. They are left that way.

The great English factories are at Mile End, and Stonehaven.

The industrious Germans have many small factories, one in every place whose name ends with *stein.* The French factories are at all places called Dompierre, but the principal one is at Pierrebuffière in Haute-Vienne.

The sprite who juggles with the numbers is himself as old as milestones, for the Romans knew him well and called him Denumerator, which is a little formidable, but in English we know him simply as Shot, which is flippant. He wears, these days, a costume of green, edged with brown, and a little brown hat with the edges turned up to lie flat along the sides, with a brown feather in it. On his heels he has wings, like Mercury, and he shoots the numbers from a light blow-gun. He may shoot the digits off or on to the milestones, according to whether the inscription says "To A——— x miles," or "From A——— x miles," and this time he was shooting them off, and the stone said "To Vayrac, 7 kms." It was quite heartening, for the last one had said eight.

Now, this business of milestones was getting quite unwieldy not long ago. The English milestone trust had completed vast plans to supply the whole world with milestones, using Ireland as a quarry, but the Irish rebelled against it, and very properly declared their independence, putting such a heavy duty on the export of stone that the whole scheme fell through and came to nothing. But the French, who were anxiously watching, at once proposed to enter the field of intensive production, for they saw what a golden opportunity was offered by the demolition of the walls of Paris. Here Shot himself stepped in (the French call him Pflisse) and said that it would never do—it would keep him altogether too busy. He explained that as things are, he can be at any milestone, anywhere, in a twinkling, the instant before a traveller sees it, and he said that it is not yet possible for two travellers to see two different milestones at *exactly* the same moment. But, he explained, if they were suddenly to increase the output of milestones enormously, as they proposed, he could no longer always be there, and people would begin to notice that the numbers were not quite right, and would ask: "What's the use of these things, anyway?" However, he suggested that the progressive departments in France go in for intensification, by setting up hectometre stones, which need no numbers at all. That, he said, would allow the milestone business to expand normally. He knew that business must expand, for he had once heard Augustus Cæsar say something about it. The French agreed, as we know, and Shot went off to England, to try to dissuade them from adopting the metric system there. He pointed out to them that it would mean the loss of one of the best words in their language, and the English were convinced at once and for ever.

I cannot bring myself to confide to you, at the time, things like this sudden appearance of Shot, because, although you always listen with real interest and respect, and do not smile, I am afraid that you might smile, just once, and that would spoil it all. But this is quite true, as you must know, for whoever saw the *same* numbers on successive milestones? Shot himself always changes them to what you see, but Shot himself is *not* always seen.

Now, it became dark soon after this, very soon, and very dark, and there were farmhouses scattered all along the way, all over the country. We were making slow progress, for your ankle was very bad, and it seemed that Vayrac would never appear. But Shot remained with us, because he knew that we looked for every milestone even in the dark, and so, every stone said convincingly that we were nearer to Vayrac. And I'm sure he did something to you, gave you the heart to go on, although you didn't know he was there, and mightn't have believed in him.

The land became flat, and there were ditches and willows beside the road. We heard bells and thought they must be the bells of Vayrac, but they must have been at St. Michel, a nearer place, but the wrong one. A dog rushed at us near some dark houses, but stopped at once and kept his distance when he saw us picking up stones, and this we found to be true in general of dogs in French villages—they are very respectful to people who carry stones in their hands. At another place we asked a man in a side lane where Vayrac was, but he said only what we already knew, that it was further on, and to the right.

And how dark it was! The darkest night of the whole journey, like that night when we were walking to Bear Mountain up the Hudson, when the darkness made it seem that fantastic, giant figures were dancing before us on the road.

At last we came to Vayrac, and found it dead and black. Which of the several streets should we follow? You felt that you could not make an unnecessary step, so you waited while I went up one street to find an hotel, or at least a person who would direct us. I went a long way, and found a little girl, who pointed out the hotel. I whistled loudly to you. Windows opened at once on both sides of the street and heads appeared, to watch me wait until you limped up to me; to watch us both go towards the hotel.

The hotel said no. Said there were no rooms at all.

But our case was desperate, so I sank our dignity and said: "Look here, Monsieur, we're two foreigners, and we're making a walking tour through France to see some of the famous places and beautiful scenery—everybody talks of the beauty of the Dordogne. We've come from Tulle to-day. We've come all the way from Paris on foot, and we're going to—Toulouse. Surely you can at least give us a bed for the night?"

And at once the patron and the patronne and the garçon and the men who were drinking decided together that if we were *tourists* of course that made everything different, and we could certainly have a room, and when would we like dinner?

We had walked forty-three kilometres and had arrived at Vayrac at eight o'clock, so we had dinner at once. There was another man in the dining room, but we were all silent until the meal was over. After dinner the other gentleman "investigated" us. He had already heard that we were tourists, and said that he had met two "other Englishmen" (the blazes!) yesterday, further east, who were also walking in this district. Very interesting. Yes, a great deal to see. A great deal that *must* be seen. Now, for instance, we must go to the following places. . . . We explained that we knew, had decided, where we were going; but this didn't suit the gentleman at all. He made out an itinerary for us on the back of an envelope (I have it still), indicating a number of centres that covered a hundred miles all around Vayrac, and insisted that we must go to them all. This one had ruins; that had hot springs; another had a ninth century chapel, and to miss any of them was criminal. He seemed to look upon us as ignorant people who had unlimited money and leisure at our disposal—eccentric Englishmen. We thanked him for his trouble, and, as we were blinking with drowsiness, we moved to go. But the gentleman detained us with a commanding gesture. He looked at us very severely for a few moments, and then, thumping the table with his fist, he boomed out a startling order:

"GO TO THE GOUFFRE DE PADIRAC!"

We were too astonished to do more than stammer politely, as we retreated through the door, but he repeated the order with loud finality as we escaped.

I began to think that it must be compulsory, a local ordinance of the gendarmerie. It quite destroyed the more poetical suggestiveness of the elfin girl's enthusiasm. Why on earth should we have to go to the Gouffre de Padirac if we didn't want to? We became hostile towards this hole in the ground to which everybody must go, and made up our minds that we would obstinately avoid it, even at the expense of a détour, should our road pass anywhere near it.

Once in our room, a white room for a change, you found it necessary to go downstairs again for something, and you stayed away nearly half an hour. It was the first time we had been out of each other's presence, except when asleep, since we left Paris, and it made me realise how impossible it would be for me to make a journey like this alone. You came back to say that you had been waylaid by the patron, and asked to drink tilleul with the family, and that you had mystified them by declining to have it improved by the addition of rum.

I massaged your feet and legs, but the tendon was too painful to bear even a very light touch. You seemed considerably eased by the rest, and we both slept soundly as tired children.

That night, in the dark, we had crossed from Corrèze, about three kilometres from Vayrac, into another department, and its name is Lot.

XIV

FERRIES OF THE DORDOGNE

WHAT a nasty little place Vayrac was when we looked at it in the morning! Open, untidy, muddy, saying plainly that it could be dry and dusty at other times. But there was just enough suggestion, in the light colours of the buildings, a glimpse of wistaria in bloom, to say that other travellers might chance to see Vayrac in a fleeting moment of charm. I have had that kind of experience, in a disgusting little village called Buire in Picardy, where I used to wade through mud between decaying houses to get to my billet. One afternoon a late April snowstorm transfigured Buire for half an hour, and I saw in it a massed beauty of line and form and the strange sight of apple blossoms delicately gay against the snow.

Our road from Vayrac went level and straight over the river flats of the Dordogne, westward. The wide, green flats looked unhealthy, and the road was muddy, but the hillsides of the valley were a delight. For half-way up they were made of those rich, brown, chocolate soils we had seen up the valley of the Sourdoire yesterday, and, lying on top of them, forming the high land, were dove-grey limestones, tinted in places with the pale ochre and rusty red of the iron the rain had leached out of them. This limestone formed a kind of cover or top to the country, and one could conceive the idea of stripping or peeling it off, to expose the dark shales beneath it. The line of division between the shale and the limestone was not flat, not even, but above it the limestone edged the valley with cliffs on either side. Covering the gentler, brown slopes below them were vineyards, precise rows of pruned grapevines, that seemed to climb from the river flats up to the bases of the cliffs; whose precision and regularity expressed every swelling beauty in the round curves of the hills.

We went about three kilometres along that level road. South of us, beside us, was the railway line, and beyond it the little Sourdoire, meandering over the wide flood-plain of the Dordogne. Then we turned sharply south along a track that leads to a primitive suspension bridge just below the junction of the Sourdoire and the Dordogne.

We lingered on the bridge, hung over that most beautiful of rivers, the great Dordogne. It was what I call a " Californian morning," almost dazzling, a morning of warm air over clear waters, and a soft, smoky loveliness in the colours of the world. The river was running swiftly over grey shingle, divided into several channels by long, low islands of shingle, and on the banks, on the islands, willows overhung the water, all a slenderness of young green leaves and polished branches and twigs, round and hard, yet pliant, brown and green. Sunlight rippled on the surface of the water, but far more interesting was the play of wriggling beams and shadowy stripes over the pebbles of the very bottom, as we looked through the limpid, sliding water at the stones.

On the southern side the river was close to the cliffs. We turned south-west along the road, and at one point decided to make use of some thickets under the cliffs, but an old man whom we had not noticed, working in a field between us and the river, became very excited, shouting to us to come down, keep to the road. We pretended not to understand very well, but the only way to silence the old man was to kill him or obey him, so we obeyed him; but this was a pity, for there were holes and grottos in the cliffs above here, and leading to one of them was a ladder of stout timber. It was probably another case of "apply to the concierge and pay five francs," and the old man may have been the guide to the caves.

The river had slid away from the cliffs but the road kept close to them, and the valley here was rich with vineyards and orchards, plum, pear, apple, and quince. At Floirac, a small village of one-storied houses and two very small churches, we rested by a railway line that here crossed the river. There were berries and other vines in the gardens of Floirac, and we know that the inhabitants are inquisitive because some men who drove out to go up the valley gaped at us until the road put us out of sight. We followed a large waggon through the village, for the road was too narrow to let us pass; and at the railway gates we had to wait until a leisurely gatekeeper thought there was enough traffic to make it worth while opening them.

We came next to Foussac, a village that is hidden by many walls and many trees, and the way of the traveller is uncertain, both as to how to enter Foussac and how to pass it. We found the way in, but inside Foussac there were only a few old women and many ducks. We were given to understand, somewhat vaguely, that the way to get past the village was to go out of it again, so we retreated by the way we had come, and when nearly out met a little girl of eleven or twelve. She had a charming air of confidence, and she gave us exact and concise directions. We were to skirt the village northward as far as a bend in the road, whence we were to continue straight on by a track over the fields to the ferry landing among trees on the river bank. There we were to shout for Frédéric, and the ferryman would come for us from across the river. That little girl should be honoured by a poem, and I think the duty falls to you, Max, for you make the better poems, and you understand little girls of eleven better than I do.

At the bend of the road was a small car and in the car was the gentleman who had made out an itinerary for us the night before. He too seemed in doubt as to how to pass Foussac. He looked at us with curious disgust, for to find us there meant that his advice had been thrown away—the road to the Gouffre de Padirac lay on the opposite side of Vayrac. He returned our greeting with a forced politeness, taking no pains to hide his disapproval. Evidently, he dismissed us as blockheads.

The field was deep in grass, and an old woman was minding some animals among the trees. At the ferry landing there was a slender black boat, double-ended, flat-bottomed, a symmetrical, graceful thing, yet practical, the kind of boat I knew, from pictures, to be extensively used on the Dordogne. I believe they use similar boats on the Tarn also. The shallow curve brings bow and stern slightly out of the water, like a canoe or a gondola, but the lines are extremely simple.

The river at this place was deep and narrow, swirling around great masses of limestone, as grey and soft as the feathers of doves, over by Foussac, downstream. Opposite, there were cliffs rising from the water also, but they ended abruptly by a sandy flat covered with short grass, that sloped gently to the river.

On this flat was a long, low, white house, and in the yard was Frédéric, chopping wood. We shouted to him, and he waved an arm that asked us to be patient. When he had finished his task he came down to the bank, shoved into the water one of the five or six boats that were hauled up on the sand, and paddled slowly across, using only one paddle, and sitting right at the stern of the boat. Frédéric managed his ferry scientifically. He went first a little downstream, edging towards the middle, to cross the strong current where it ran in a deep channel, then he came up on our side in the slow, shallow water along the bank. A man of few words, he told us to get in, not to try to help in handling the boat, but to sit down; and he paddled slowly back with us.

It was a long time since I had felt the motion of a small boat, and there was a fascination in floating on the Dordogne. Were Frédéric to lose the only paddle, we could all float down to Bergerac, sixty or seventy miles down the winding river, and we both wanted to go there, for we both love Cyrano as one of the most lovable characters that has ever been imagined. I say imagined, because the Cyrano of the play is a somewhat different person from the real gentleman who called himself Cyrano de Bergerac. But there is doubt, I believe, that the real gentleman ever had anything to do with the town of Bergerac—he may, like Casanova, have merely chosen the noble name that pleased him most—and Henry told us that in Bergerac many inns and cafés have taken such names as "Au bon Cyrano," which would be a terrible state of affairs to contemplate. All the same, it would have been a delightful chance, to have drifted down there by accident, and to all the other places whence the Cadets of Gascony came, like Castel-Jaloux. But it is perhaps best that Frédéric was careful with the paddle, and that Bergerac remains true, because unseen. And Frédéric very soon made me forget it all by running the bow up over the pebbles of the bank and asking us to get out. We consulted him about his fare, but he said tragically that there was no regular fare. We asked him if three francs would do, and we understood that it would be excellent. He returned to his axe, and we went over to the road behind the house.

We met, on the roadside, a tree that caused us to stop and talk. It was luxuriantly blooming, with stiff sprays of small blossoms, *vieux rose* in colour, and very gay. It had the leaves of a beech, but they were heart-shaped, and it was, and remains a stranger to us, though I have since seen the same kind of tree at Geneva. There was also a roadhouse, a place that spoke of tourists, and automobiles, and the kind of people who go to the Gouffre de Padirac.

We soon left the main road, that crossed the river, for a pavé road that ran under the cliffs. It was the first pavé we had seen outside a town since we had left Bourges, I think, but the map shows quite a number of short lengths of pavé in this part of the Dordogne valley.

This road brought us to Gluges, a brown village huddled against the cliffs and partly built into them. Chambers had been excavated, rock platforms utilised, caves enlarged, yet, for all this work, there were houses in Gluges that were deserted, abandoned.

The road beyond here was grotesquely grand, and for more than a kilometre it ran beside the river, very little above the water, and under the projecting, overhanging mass of the limestone. A low stone wall ran beside it but in times of flood it must be covered by rushing waters, and to walk along that road is to feel the menace of water below, and the crushing mass of the rock overhead. Where the river turns south the pavé ends, and the road climbs the rough hills. In a narrow, dry valley above the roadway, here, there were thorny, aromatic plants, like the plants of deserts and arid country, and they gave me a momentary sense of fellowship. In the rugged stony hills near Sydney there are plants that look the same, and I knew those colours, their subdued variety, those forms of stiff leaf and thorn, for things that are part of my very life.

From the rough hills we descended quickly to a more open part of the valley, walking for miles over sandy loam, in settled country where people have gardens, to Creysse, a large village by the river, but, like Foussac, a place that hides itself. Creysse has a great pile of a church, very plain, elephantine in bulk though pleasing in form, and it carries a fretted belfry. In Creysse we were able, for the first time in France, to buy everything needed for an attractive lunch at the one shop. There were bread, wine, pâté, excellent cheese, and chocolate, costing in all, nine francs. And at Creysse we had to cross the river again.

The people in the shop showed us the way to the ferry, and indicated the house that controlled it. From that house there came a most delightful brown girl to ferry us. She had the beauty of outdoor things, this tall, slim, black-haired girl, and her eyes were fearless and her wrists were strong. She declined any help with the boat, saying that we were of course unaccustomed to this kind of a boat, and it was better for the person who was used to it to do everything unaided, and thus, unimpeded. But she said it with a disarming smile of thanks. The river here was much narrower, deeper, and swifter; the earthy banks much higher, than at Frédéric's ferry; and the girl managed her boat with extraordinary skill.

She wasted no energy, made no unnecessary effort, but with deft twists of the paddle seemed to play with the current so that it did half the work, and all too quickly we were at the other side. We asked the fare and she said one franc, so we gave her two. She handed one back, as though we had not understood, and would accept it only when we said laughingly that we thought the fare should be one franc each. We watched her ferry back, for the joy of seeing her skill, and for the joy of keeping her in our lives a little while longer. She made the boat fast, there were shouts of good-bye, hands were waved, and we turned and climbed the high earthy bank.

We came to Meyronne, a smiling, open village with many gardens, and beyond it our road went for a mile over a flat meadow towards the cliffs. Just under the cliffs ran a tiny stream crossed by a stone bridge of one graceful arch. Here was the truly inviting place for lunch, down by the low banks, hidden from the higher meadow, hidden from the road that ran behind the trees along the foot of the cliffs; hidden from everywhere but the bridge—a sunny, quiet spot.

That lunch was a mood, one of childish gladness, gladness and absurdity. People came down the road under the cliffs, or from Meyronne, and crossed the bridge, but did not see us, though we could see them. Only the priest cycling past called out a loud "good day." We sent the empty pâté tin floating down the brook loaded with two pebbles. We took childish photos of each other lying on our backs drinking from the canettes. Everything seemed play and radiance there, and we made the most of it. High in the cliffs were a number of grottos and holes, and the cliffs themselves were called the Rochers de Sainte Marie. I think we forgot every part of our existence there, except the gladness of the present, and when the priest passed back over the bridge in the early afternoon he called out "I see you're having a *very* good day." We liked that priest: he understood the rightness of joy in life.

I have made a chapter of this single morning, these seventeen short kilometres, when we went south-west instead of south, because it was a chapter to us, belonging neither to the past nor the future of those days; neither to what lay behind nor ahead. And too, because that lovely stretch of the valley of the Dordogne, nearly all that we were to see of this clear, shining river, is a thing apart. It has no right whatever to be in the department of Lot.

XV

LOT

THE person who named the department of Lot must have been "sullenly irradiated with the fires of genius," for Lot is exactly like its name. After we left out pleasant picnic-ground to trudge for miles along an uninteresting road that somehow did not exhibit the beauty of the Dordogne, I found myself composing doggerel:

"*The valleys of Lot*
Are awfully hot—
Beer, beer, beer.
Let us look for a spot
Where they'll sell us a pot
Of beer, beer, beer."

We rolled our coats and put them in the packs, but that made little difference. It was trying, too, to find the road becoming civilised, and at Lacave, a place that lies in a great bend of the river, we found ourselves confronted by a "resort." There were caves there, equipped with electric light, and neat paths and steps conducted the sight-seers to a locked gateway. If they paid, they might go through a hole there, into passages and galleries within the cliff. And they might also park their cars by driving them straight into a natural garage, a great cavern beside the road. For the same tourist there were up-to-date and very obtrusive public conveniences on the opposite side of the road. And a roadhouse, placed strategically invited them to enter and spend their money.

"*We may be wanting beer*
But we mustn't have it here:
The place is very ugly
And the drinks are very dear."

You evidently thought the same, for we passed it all by, without making any remarks about beer aloud.

The monotony of that hot hour threw me back into the variety and entertainment of my own thoughts, for neither of us wanted to talk. I remembered two things. Last night you suffered from a painful ankle, and we had both forgotten about it, or at least neither had mentioned it all the morning. The ankle seemed to have been cured by rest, and the joy of novelty. And there were caves along the Dordogne—many, many caves besides the Gouffre de Padirac. Somewhere along this valley were the celebrated caves where the anthropologists found the prehistoric drawings made by cave men on the bones and horns of animals, drawings that rank as fine artistic performances, even when judged by the standards of to-day. Unfortunately they have been published in every text-book that touches the fringes of prehistory and are now commonplace. And so little did I remember of what those text-books say, that I didn't know if we were close to those particular caves or not. They might have been in another department, in Cantal, to the east, or in Dordogne itself to the west, and somehow I think that that is where they are. So another advantage would have accrued to us had Frédéric dropped the paddle.

But our last glimpse of the Dordogne was beautiful. The river was flowing around the foot of an imposing, high bluff, and on the brink of the bluff, overhanging the river, was a château, more splendidly placed than the vaunted châteaux of the Loire, and a thing of strength. I believe it was the last real château we saw in France, and indeed, châteaux seem, like St. Joan of Arc, to be things of the north.

From here we turned into the valley of the river Ouysse, a small stream that is navigable for the skiffs of the Dordogne for a short distance. Its gentle course is interrupted by an oblique weir every half a kilometre, and, as we climbed up the steep road the valley floor became narrower, seemed to get greener, in contrast with the increasing dryness, the smooth bareness of the enclosing hills. From the east comes a stream called the Alzou, to join the Ouysse, a much longer stream than the Ouysse itself, and away up the valley of the Alzou is Rocamadour, where the gentleman from Vayrac told us we must go, goodness only knows why, but which I like for the strong swing in the sound of its name.

When we got to Calès we were on top of the arid land of Lot. We found there a large, open village, on the crown of a great, bare billow of the land, a village asleep in the sun, like Saclas in Beauce. We opened the door of the Hôtel de France and went inside, but there was nobody there. We made loud noises, but nobody came. We made very loud noises, but still nobody came. We explored several rooms, making noises, and at last we heard above us the sounds of a person disturbed from slumber. We called out, the person responded, and after some minutes an aged and fat patronne came down and served us beer from such small bottles that we had to have more. We asked this patronne if there were an hotel in St. Projet, and she said there were three, so I wrote the names of their proprietors on the margin of the map: Liebet, Barra, and Constant.

We left Calès feeling refreshed, noticing only the neglected air of the place, and that a few houses appeared to be unoccupied, deserted. We were able to look across the bare, open land of Lot, where the smooth, high hills rise gently in billows, rounded, covered with brown grass, nearly treeless in spite of the green tint of the map. The trees of Lot are stunted and poor, and there are no forests, only dry brakes of young trees, that are small here, extensive there, but never so dense as to hide the ground between the trees. And Lot is a country where the villages are big, far apart, crowning the round hilltops. From Calès we could see Reilhaguet on its ample hilltop five kilometres away, and we walked for an hour to get to it.

During that hour there were many strange things to remark. The road would descend into hollows, valleys, and Calès and Reilhaguet would disappear from view for a while, but in the valleys there were no streams. The smooth bottoms were greener than the hills, and doubtless in Winter the water soaked along them, perhaps flowing over the surface. But the whole of Lot is made of grey limestone, and limestone is porous. It also dissolves in rain-water. There may be good rains in Lot for all I know, but the rain sinks quickly into the rock and runs in channels underground, emerging to north or south, as little, short rivers like the Ouysse, that flow to the Dordogne and to the big river that is also called Lot. Some streams may flow entirely underground, and others, flowing towards the Dordogne, never reach it by a surface path, for the map shows them disappearing into caverns, gouffres, not to reappear on the surface.

Now, it is the habit of countries made of limestone or chalk, countries that slowly *dissolve* away, to develop convex hills, flatter on their higher than their lower slopes. I do not know why this should be, but the curves are very smooth and pure. It is the same in Picardy, and on Salisbury Plain in England. Nothing betrays the defects, or reveals the perfect beauty, of a curving hillside better, than the mathematical curve of a good, properly planned road, and we saw such a road during the afternoon. There were three kilometres of perfect, sloping curve, bent around the steep side of a long hill, a road that converged on to ours, and it revealed the form of that hill in one long view, as something exquisitely pure. The same hill was covered with sparse woods of poor oak.

Where the lower slopes of the hills were steep we noticed that they were also very stony, yet people seemed to have a use for the stony ground, because, in many places, they had piled the stones in great, parallel rows, ridges of piled stones, that ran straight down the hillsides, a hundred, two hundred yards apart. They even ran down through the woods in some places, and I cannot imagine the use of such labour as piling these stones in so dry a land.

The gentler, broad hilltops, however, were better land than the steep flanks, for on them the slow rotting of the limestone had left a good, even a rich soil, and, were the hilltop wide enough, people could obtain water by sinking wells into the soil. It is for that reason that the villages of Lot are found on the big hilltops, far apart.

Coming into Reilhaguet we found the fields around the village enclosed by grey stone walls and one field was covered with the dry, fluffy heads of last year's dandelions. We met an old woman and two girls driving sheep and we had to wait to let them pass, for the sheep took fright and became excited. There were many sheep around this village, tended by children, and pasturing high up, on the steep flanks of the hilltop, eating the grass on the good soil where the land was too steep to plough. Looking back before entering Reilhaguet we could see Calès on its far-away hilltop, but Reilhaguet was uninteresting and we walked through it without stopping.

Spell came when we were a kilometre past the village, and we sat on the grass, near a stone wall in a stony field. I enjoyed that cigarette, and we both enjoyed a truly wonderful view of Reilhaguet, seen across a deep hollow from where we were. The village appeared to have been carelessly spilled over the broad crown of the hill, and the pattern of the grey stone walls around its little fields, the quiet variety of colour of the fields themselves, green, brown, even rich purple where the soil had been freshly ploughed, combined with the light of evening to make a delicate picture of a dull village in Lot where life is hard.

We lost our way in the dusk, for there are more roads in Lot than are shown on the map. A man with a pitch-fork showed where the lights of St. Projet lay, a couple of miles off on a hilltop. The country seemed so open that we thought we would not bother about roads, but would go straight across towards the town. Nothing could have given a better idea of Lot. We stumbled over a very stony field of poor wheat that reminded me of flint-strewn fields in Hampshire. We came unexpectedly to stone walls, and found it remarkably easy to dislodge a hundredweight of stone in getting over one. We blundered in the dark on to low remnants of stone walls that had been allowed to fall to ruin. And, on the lower ground, we ran without warning into thorny and impenetrable hedges. We found the slopes a good deal steeper than they appeared to be and we decided that the road would have been much better—could we have found it. Eventually we did find a road leading straight on our line of march into St. Projet. But it was under repair, the surface one of coarse, angular, unrolled stones, and there were high banks and stone walls on either side. We picked an uncomfortable way over the stones, walking on our toes for half a mile, and entered the village to find it much, much smaller than we expected. The map suggested a town, but the place was smaller than Calès. It was seven o'clock, long after dark. How would we be received?

At the hotel of M. Liebet there were no rooms, and we believe that M. Liebet told the truth about it, for the house was small. But he said that chez Constant there were rooms. This was useful information. We entered the house of Constant and found it almost in darkness, the only light that of a kitchen fire on an open hearth. Several people and a couple of children were in there, and a youngish, not very prepossessing woman announced herself as Mme. Constant.

St. Projet is a long way from everywhere, so we approached Mme. Constant guilefully. We said that we were foreigners walking through France for our own pleasure; that we had come from Paris, and directly that day from Vayrac, and expected to arrive the next day at Cahors. We had marked St. Projet as a staging place when preparing our itinerary, and at Calès had enquired about hotels here, and were given the name of Liebet. But St. Projet was smaller than we had thought, and M. Liebet's hostelry "did not lodge," which, as we could see, was quite evident. But M. Liebet had recommended us to Mme. Constant, at whose house, he said, we would be sure to find rooms. We hoped that the unexpected arrival of guests would not inconvenience Madame, but Madame would understand that, at this hour of night, when it was too late to go, say, to Gourdon or Labastide-Murat, we would not make any excessive demands—would be satisfied with very simple arrangements. And what, please, were Madame's terms? For we knew that some patronnes preferred to have this little matter settled in advance.

It was deliberate pleading, in our best French, carried in our most winning manner, and Madame was given no opportunity to interrupt before we had finished. The tone indicated that we took it as a matter of course that we would be accepted—as though we had never heard of travellers being refused a lodging. But the poor woman was dumbfounded by this sudden appearance of two curiously dressed strangers, and handcuffed by M. Liebet's assurance that she had rooms. She fluttered feebly, hesitated for minutes, and then told somebody to light the lamp—she wanted to see us properly before making any decision. She examined us rather shyly, doubtfully, and at last said that she had only one room, one bed, and as for dinner, well, it was late, and there was very little she could give us. We said that that would be splendid; one bed would suit us quite well for to-night, and for dinner, why, the pot au feu and an omelette would be sufficient. Madame accepted the situation, but her misgivings showed plainly in her expression. She asked us to wait in the bare dining room, where she lit a hanging kerosene lamp.

In a few minutes we sought her to tell her that the lamp was smoking badly, the smuts falling over the table-cloth, and she became very concerned. We tried to help adjust the flame, but the lamp had to be replaced by another that smoked not so badly. As the dinner was being prepared by a small girl, we kept Madame in conversation, in order to restore her calmness, and before long we could see that she was gaining confidence in us. Before the dinner was served we were talking like old friends, all about the slow modernisation of Lot; how the electric light was as far as Gourdon, the town on the railway, and was expected at St. Projet, but the work moved slowly, for Lot was poor, of little interest to the outside world, and strangers were rare.

When she went out you remarked: "It's interesting to watch them finding out that we're much nicer than we look, and they all do." And it was indeed interesting, that slow growth of approval that we had watched so many times. These people seemed at first to be afraid of us, but the fear used to change into a kind of friendly respect, respect for our education, warmed by an appreciation of our interest in local things. They remarked that we spoke "French," fairly correct, grammatical French, in spite of a foreign accent. And we displayed, through our observations of the day and our experience of the journey, an intelligent curiosity about things, an appreciation of differences. You are naturally "versed in country things," and that seems to penetrate more quickly into the peasant mind than anything else.

The dinner was good, soup, pork, omelette, and coffee, and we were careful to send a compliment to the kitchen. We stayed in the dining room for a while after dinner, to watch a group of boys playing cards. They spoke a patois which we could not understand, but their words for the numbers interested you on account of a closer similarity to English than exists in French. For three I remember you discovered that they said *tree*, not *trois* and a couple of other numbers were, I think, similarly modified towards the English sounds.

Our room was quaint. A small alcove, with three walls, and only a big curtain between us and the family. As we put the candle down a huge black cat rushed from a cupboard in the wall and fled downstairs. It is another of your observations that the French cat is very large and has no kittens, but, as this research upon cats in Europe has been extended beyond the confines of France, I think we will not enter into any detail here. It is better to reserve what we have to say for a more serious treatise on "*The Foreign Cat: its* *appearance, habits and understanding.*" We might profitably collaborate on such a work. There was no window to our room, but a draught waved the curtain eerily. The floor had a marked slope, so that the bed sloped badly too, but after forty kilometres and a struggle across country in the dark, these things mattered very little.

In the morning, while we were taking coffee, a most besotted old man and woman came in and drank several glasses of cognac—before half-past eight. Even the drinking of wine before midday seems to me a kind of perversion, but I suppose that feelings in these matters depend upon custom. In the little square were several motor 'buses, from the large town of Gourdon, nine kilometres to the west, and, although such services seemed to be rare in France, these buses at St. Projet were well patronised.

We had a long walk down the lane to the main road, for the map shows that most places in Lot are not on the main roads. In this it is like the Gâtinais, but in Lot the main roads keep as much as possible to the high, flat ridges, and this brings them here and there to cross the crown of a hill, and so to pass naturally through a large village.

On the main road was a boy on a bicycle, who followed us, passing and repassing by cycling up and down, along the two kilometres to Peyrebrune, a small collection of houses lining the roads at a crossroads. He was very interested in the two pedestrians who carried packs, but tried not to appear so, avoiding our direct gaze as he passed, and giving no pretext for a greeting. Beyond this little village, at the first halt, we put our coats into our packs, for the morning was warm. As we were doing so a man came up the road, and we were sure that he would speak out of mere curiosity. He did, telling us, for want of anything else to say, that we were on the main road from Paris to Toulouse, Route Nationale No. 20, which we knew very well.

A short distance beyond here the road made a big loop around the contours of the head of a valley, and we thought we would save distance by cutting straight across the valley to join the road where it swung back to its general direction on the far side. The distance across was greater than we imagined, and there were hedges and rough ground to impede us. The bottom of the valley was green, much greener than the hills, but it contained no stream. We saved perhaps a kilometre and a quarter this way, but we lost a lot of breath, wasted much effort, and gained little time.

The pronounced individuality of Lot, its rolling, bare hills, its dull colours, are monotonous, and perhaps because of this we were unduly interested to find the road lined with trees a few miles further on, at Estampe, and to find, at a crossroads there, a sign that gave the distance to both Paris and Toulouse. Evidently there were travellers who began to get interested in the distance to Toulouse at this point, although it was about seventy-five miles away in a straight line. We were mildly interested ourselves, but we had intermediate objectives that made Toulouse a place of no direct concern to us yet. The sign reminded me of the one pointing to Bordeaux at Tulle, at least a hundred and twelve miles as the crow flies from Bordeaux: expressions of the "magnetic field" of two big cities.

From Estampe we had been following the green floor of a dry valley, and just beyond this crossroads it led us to something that was almost exciting—a real brook, a clear, bubbling little stream called the Céou, which flows to the south-west. There were a stone bridge, and a small settlement, both called Pont de Rode, and a few people were working in the garden-fields behind the houses. It was time to rest, and the water suggested the performance of a daily rite generally observed at our place of lodging, but the hotel of Mme. Constant was as waterless as Lot itself. I took the canettes down to the stream and washed them, for stale wine is unpleasant, and fresh wine must be put into clean bottles.

There were trees along the road as far as Frayssinet, or rather, as far as a solitary roadhouse opposite Frayssinet, for the village stood on a hilltop half a mile east of the main road. From here we tramped through the warm forenoon over the high ground, with little to interest us except long views of Labastide-Murat, five miles east of us, a great village sprawling over the broad, flattened crown of the highest hill in Lot, perched, as it were, on the top of the broad back of Lot, thirteen hundred feet above the sea, and visible perhaps for ten open miles around. It aspires to dignity, and is capital of its canton.

We proposed to have lunch at a place called la Mothe, but it too was off the road, in a hollow where a stream begins, and too far, too small to be attractive. We retraced our steps about a mile, to a solitary restaurant we had noticed beside the road, where a very fat woman received us kindly and took us into the bedroom. She seated us at a round table there, and discussed lunch with the deliberation of a Buddhist. We arranged to have a simple lunch that would not take long to be prepared.

The lady then staggered out, and after a few minutes we saw a girl leave the house and go quickly up the road. We remembered that there were a few buildings down a junction road not far back, and realised that the fat woman had despatched a messenger for meat! We had been annoyed by this kind of pride before, and I don't know which was worse, to have a restaurant refuse to serve us, or to have the patronne ignore our wishes by insisting on serving a meal that she considered worthy of the establishment, no matter how long we might have to wait for it. But it is impossible to convince a patronne that her idea of things is inconvenient. Lunch proceeded slowly, though not unpleasantly, in a manner that suited the warm, hazy day, the dry and dusty, yet fairly fresh countryside. It would have been wrong to have hurried there.

When we had nearly finished the woman insisted that we have more wine, though we had had more than enough already. Grunting at our refusal, she drifted and shuffled into the cellar, brought more wine, and poured it out. You had been observing her carefully—it seems second nature to you to observe and read people—and you discovered the secret of her insistence. She wanted more wine really for herself! And a certain heavy dullness and stupidity about her suggested the habitual wine drunkard. But her pride in the house caused us to have a very nourishing lunch.

From la Mothe we could see for a long distance up the road to villages ahead, on the line of march and beside it, and I realised that to walk across Lot is to be robbed of surprises, for the land conceals nothing, displays everything indeed, long in advance of the traveller's arrival abreast of things. But the distinctive though monotonous individuality of this country extends even to the names of its places. *Bastide*, which means a country house or manor house, the southern representative of the château, is common in the names of this part of the land, and not only are there many *ac's*, but the syllables *ès*, *reil*, *ou*, and *auz* occur in many names. Stubborn, rough names they are, for the most part.

I had the feeling, that afternoon, that we were just walking along the road to get somewhere, to get to Cahors, for I had observed the simple nature of Lot yesterday, a nature that repeats itself endlessly. According to a map I had seen in an old Guide Michelin I remembered that truffles are supposed to come from this country, but we saw nothing of truffles nor of the pigs that are supposed to root them out of the ground. We talked of this, and said that we didn't believe it.

But how little I can remember of our interminable conversations! We talked of a million things; of every phase and aspect of life; of nearly every phase of our own lives: but most of it is submerged under my memory. You could doubtless cause a lot of it to float up again, but without your help I can recall nothing clearer than the delight of many of those long hours of talk. I need no help to appreciate the steady growth of an understanding that became almost instinctive—the direct result of those increasingly honest days of incessant yarning. But what is talk? The words may mean nothing, yet they act like fingers, like touch, moving at first cautiously, then surely over things, that persons may come to recognise and know one another.

A hamlet called Pelacoy brought with it something like variety. There were people idling about, sitting in the sun in front of the tiny houses and shops in the mid-afternoon as though they had all the time in the world. The land was of good quality here, and there were hedges and fields of wheat around the village. There were houses in gardens and small fields, that looked attractive, well cared for, places warm with life and use, but a number of these houses were shut. There was nobody in them. Why? They were not deserted. They had not even the air of temporary neglect that says the family is absent for a few weeks' holiday. Why were these houses vacant? Doubtless for some very simple reason, but why deprive so slight a circumstance of its charming mystery by finding out?

Pelacoy even offered another surprise. Not far beyond it, east of the road, on a round spur that projected into a small, deep valley, were the ruins of a grey castle, square, with a round turret on each corner. Like the empty cottages it was a thing to gaze upon but not to explore, that there might be something unexplained, in this land that bares its breasts almost indecently.

Our afternoon thirst for beer was upon us, but we walked far without finding a bistro. Moncoutié is not a tiny place by the roadside, as the map shows, but a large place, off to the east, separated from the road by a deep hollow. We passed it by. The map, however, is a romantic document where it tells of Lot, for it shows the Lincoln green of forests in great patches all over the department, but I am sure that there is not a forester in the whole of Lot. Great trees do not grow on limestone. Other places were like Moncoutié, and we walked over the parched road hoping that beer would be found at St. Henry, but alas! the village does not provide even its own inhabitants with arrangements for slaking their thirst in a human and sociable manner, and besides, it was asleep.

But we forgive St. Henry, I think, don't we? Forgive it everything for the sake of what we found there. We were walking to Spain, and at St. Henry was the first proof that somewhere, in the days ahead, we would come to a land called Spain and find it real. At St. Henry the houses were not grey. They were like no houses we had ever seen in France, and around some of them were low, plaster walls. They were small houses, with verandahs and verandah railings, and steps leading up to the first floor from outside. Some of them had a whole corner of the first floor railed off to form a big, square verandah, like a room with two open sides. And the roofs of all were made of "half-round" tiles, like pipes that had been split in halves longitudinally, brownish red, warm, beautiful in colour. There was a pleasing simplicity of form about these houses, for their builders knew just how long, how high to make them, what slope to give the roofs, how far the eaves should project; and we looked at them with satisfaction. We were sure they belonged to Spain, though the nearest part of Spain was ninety miles away.

But there was no beer at St. Henry, so we walked on. Now, St. Henry is only five kilometres from Cahors, and the road became dustier and dustier, betraying the presence of the town, the frequency of traffic. Very soon we came to the place where the road begins to descend from the ridges of Lot into the valley of the river Lot, a long, winding descent, on the eastern flank of a narrow, dry valley. Down the funnel of this valley we had our first view of the green vale of the river Lot near Cahors, and discovered a scene that was almost Egyptian in the hard brilliance of its contrasts.

The valley of the Lot was wide, a flat, green flood plain, far below us, dotted with houses that were dazzlingly white, cut into squares and rectangles of green fields and black soil by rows of slender, incredibly green trees, backed by the sombre, hazy variety of the dull hills, and all beyond the tranquil river that flashed the evening sunlight back to us from close under the hills of our side of its valley.

Such a landscape can be hard and glaring, but to come upon it in the soft brightness of early evening is to receive a gift from fortune. The great, winding river Lot, a stream comparable with the Dordogne, gathers its waters a hundred miles away, on the rainy flanks of the Cantal, in the Montagnes de la Margeride, near the source of the Loire itself, and flows through this dry, stony limeland, a strong, generous thing in a winding corridor of greenery. Between its valley and the hills of Lot is something of the contrasts that exists between oasis and desert, the bright, bright green that speaks of water in the lustreless bareness of surrounding wastes. But Lot, though dry, is not a desert, and rather did the excessive brilliance of the green valley subdue the hills to greater dullness; rather, the bright thing and the dull thing each intensified the character of the other. I, at least, was able to look down on that valley with recognition, for I knew that kind of land. And perhaps you thought of cottonwoods along fitful watercourses in Arizona; of irrigated valleys in West Texas; but you didn't say so.

We sat for a long while at a place where the road skirted a small spur, looking down into the big valley, looking down into the small, dry valley; and climbing half way up the sides of the latter were many little vineyards, trim patches of dry, stony soil, and on each was a small stone cabin of one room. We surmised that people came out from town or village, to live austerely in the little cabins at vintage time and pruning time, indeed, at many times, for the soil is tilled by hand labour. While we were there several cars passed, and people came up the road in vehicles. To our "good evening" they responded with looks of sullen inspection, hardly animated enough to call curiosity, and it was there that you announced emphatically:

"The people of Lot are like Lot, A."

It seemed a just criticism, for, since we had left the Dordogne, nobody had greeted us on the road but the man near St. Projet, and nobody had returned our greetings in any but this hostile way.

The road became steeper as we went down, and then flattened into the gentle grade of the main valley. Close to where it entered the big valley was a house of Spanish design on the hillside, with a gaiety of vines and flowers in the dry garden, and on a terrace in front of it rose two noble cypresses, in form slender as candle flames.

Where we joined the highway that runs along the river was a café with flimsy iron tables and chairs painted green, and a glass roof over the verandah. Although it was late we made up our minds to have that beer. The patronne was holding a quaint court near the steps. In her arms she was nursing a black hen; talking to her was a garrulous old man; waiting for him were a donkey and a very disobedient dog that persisted in forsaking his master to chase other dogs. A girl brought us long beers, and we drank them slowly.

It was a dusty corner, and while we sat there a procession of the oldest automobiles in France passed by, going to Cahors. It was just the regular traffic of the time of day, but it solved a problem we had discussed before. What becomes of the agèd, second-hand automobiles? We know now. They are all sold to the inhabitants of Lot, who drive them until they rattle to pieces. Of the many cars that passed in an interval of twenty minutes not one seemed to have been made later than 1910, and among them were makes that are no longer on the market.

Cahors lies in a long, relatively narrow hairpin bend of the river that points nearly due south, in a pocket of lowland that slopes gently to the bottom of the U, and is encircled by an amphitheatre of cliffs and high hills. The town is not visible from the north, hence we did not see it until we were nearly there. The road from our café went gradually down along the axis of the U, right into the hairpin, and we seemed to walk an interminable distance in the growing evening before reaching the town. We came to the continuous houses and found them rather squalid. We came to the wall, a straight wall of old red brick that cuts across the top of the

U, and we passed through the city gate into a square. But the centre of Cahors was still farther on, and we came to the dingy glitter of cafés, to the promenading crowd, and to another square. We asked a chauffeur to direct us to an hotel. He was polite and clear in his directions, and he advised us to go to the Hôtel de la Croix Blanche. By the time we had gathered all the information we needed we were surrounded by a gaping crowd of twenty-five or thirty people. After thanking the chauffeur we walked through a lane of these people as though we and the chauffeur were the only persons in the streets of Cahors.

The hotel was a strange, rickety place without embellishment, but we were given a very large and quite comfortable room overlooking the street, and the dinner, served by a fat, countrified wench, was good, if ordinary. The dining room, which has left me an impression of sanded floor and soiled table linen, was full. Most of the tables were occupied by rough-looking men in shabby clothes, regular customers, who kept up a continual banter of conversation from table to table in patois, and were most familiar with the staff. At a corner table near us was a fat French family of tourists who couldn't keep their eyes off us. In vain we returned the rude gaze of Madame, for Madame continued to stare, in no way embarrassed by the fact that we returned a questioning gaze now and then. Occasionally she would make a quiet remark to the family, whereupon they would all turn to stare at us in open curiosity. We disliked them very much. The rough workmen at the other tables took us for granted after a first, quick, frank inspection, but this caricature of a French family continued the same behaviour not only throughout the meal, but throughout every meal we had at the White Cross Hotel.

After dinner we went into town, selected the best café, and took our coffee and cognac on the terrasse. The place was lively with people promenading, and, as is usual in departmental capitals, there were many soldiers and officers in uniform among the crowd. The patron of the café was affable, ingratiating, and we liked him not, for he wanted to know all our business, and was full of advice about things that he considered we should do. Fortunately it was easy to persuade him without offence that we did not wish to talk. That brought us back to his café.

The conveniences of our hotel were primitive, but the beds were comfortable, and we did some laundry work in the wash basins before retiring. In the morning we were astonished to find that the hotel had a bathroom of which it was very proud, and at once we ordered hot baths. It seemed far more attractive, at the time, to wallow in a hot bath than to explore Cahors, and it gave us, too, an opportunity to have a really thorough washing day. While you were in the bath I studied an octagonal, red-brick bell-tower through the bedroom window and found it a satisfying thing, though you didn't like it. When my turn came for the bath and I went to the bathroom with an armful of soiled clothing, I found a wonderful display of nickel, enamel, glass, and linoleum, installed in an old room altogether out of keeping with this modern, sanitary plumbing, and the patron was there to explain it all. One had only to turn the tap over the bath when a great nickel heater, like a metal cupboard, flared up automatically with a terrifying explosion, and steaming hot water flowed abundantly. I washed my dirty clothes first, and then, after a luxurious half-hour, emerged with a strange feeling of purity—the first bath since Glénic, and the first time our clothes had been soaped and rubbed and rinsed in hot water since a Parisian laundress had last seen them. We decked our room with the damp, white banners of underwear, handkerchiefs, socks (my socks *were* white), and coloured shirts. There were clothes-lines between the beds, things hanging before the window, and pendant from the furniture. We were glad the room had been tidied while we were at petit déjeuner, for maids are inquisitive, and some hotels object to wet socks hanging over the back of chairs. But we had a sense of worthy performance that Sunday morning as we went down to lunch.

After lunch we again had coffee at the best café, and were greeted like old customers. Then we explored Cahors, and found, in the town itself, little of interest. It is a simple town in plan. Two main thoroughfares cross at right angles, the one by which we had arrived, which leads to the south, to a stone bridge at the bottom of the U, and an east-west highway that leads from a new iron bridge on the east to a very ancient, turreted bridge of stone on the west. The old part of the town, where crooked streets with quaint names surround the cathedral, is in the north-east quadrant. The railway flanks Cahors on the west, crossing the river on a steel bridge between the turreted bridge, and the stone one. Between the last, and the eastern, iron bridge there is an oblique weir, over which the river drops about six feet.

The cathedral, which was ornate and mixed in style outside, proved to be plain and white inside, with large, simple arches. I think we declared it to be interesting but not beautiful. We went from the cathedral towards the eastern, iron bridge, and by the river found some trees that excited you considerably. They looked like ample poplars, with very big leaves, and you found them to be indistinguishable from cottonwoods, if not actually cottonwoods. You told me of the way the cottonwood disperses tufts of down on the wind, almost in clouds, and later in the Summer we both saw poplars doing the same, thus confirming our suspicion that the cottonwood is really a poplar.

On the bridge we stopped to watch the weir. The smooth, glassy rush of the water sliding over the stone and down under a steady, fading frill of turbulent backwater; the deceptive stillness of the river beneath us; the haste of the shallow current below the weir, all made us both wish we could shoot over that stone weir in a canoe. It would have been exciting and difficult enough to have given a satisfying thrill, could we have done it successfully, and we had faith enough in ourselves to be willing to try it.

Across the bridge was a convent, and the chapel was open—a most disappointing chapel, crowded with tawdry and gaudy images and other objects of devotion; the kind of church that you call "cluttered up"; the kind of church that always aroused our disgust. But we found the shrine of St. Anthony of Padua, and again offered pence, according to our custom.

I think that by the time we had reached Cahors we had already formed a habit with respect to churches, that was not expressed as a resolution until much later, at Toledo, that city of too many churches, where you said: "We'll go into them all, because one in twenty *might* be beautiful, and we can forget the rest."

Behind, and in the grounds of this convent, were the ruins of a truly exquisite little church, a delicate apse of the fourteenth or fifteenth century, with graceful traceries in long windows. I could not help comparing it with the chapel of the convent, and wondering what fire or faith has died out of the human imagination, to render us incapable of such spontaneous expressions of beauty to-day.

We followed the south bank of the river westward, and saw many buildings on which were tablets recording the heights of the flood waters of many a past year. They showed that the Lot in flood must rise thirty or forty feet above its customary Summer level, once every ten years or so.

People were promenading along the banks, and we caught sight of our family of tourists from the hotel coming toward us. Deliberately we hopped over a wall to avoid them, and found ourselves among the willows close to the river, where men were fishing with rods, and a beautiful girl was reading, stretched on the grassy bank in the sun. Her book must have been absorbing, for she took no notice of us at all, and we were not accustomed to being ignored. It only increased our interest in her, but without any advantage to us.

We went around to the ancient, western bridge and examined it carefully. A bridge built for archers to defend, it is a thing of great beauty. It stands on seven piers, with six high, pointed arches between them, and it rises from the ends to the centre. As with all the ancient stone bridges we saw, each pier is pointed in plan on the upstream side, presenting a peak that divides the rushing current. There are three tall turrets with pyramidal tops, one over each end and one over the centre pier, and the lower part of each turret forms an arch over the roadway. For the system of defence that it expresses it is almost an impregnable bridge, for the roadway could be barred by a great portcullis and heavy doors below each turret, while from the turrets themselves the bowmen could command all approaches. There must be passages and stairways in the stonework, for there are platforms for the bowmen on the piers below the level of the pointed arches, and there must therefore be means of covered communication between all the turrets, even when the road is barricaded. That bridge was an admirable thing, and it made Cahors an adventure.

The cliffs, and the steep, rocky hillsides challenged us to climb, and we climbed where there was no path, on to the top of the high land that overlooks Cahors on all sides. People were promenading even up there. And there I betrayed you, by keeping an inefficient watch when you took refuge among the bushes. A man and a woman suddenly appeared from under a slope before I could give warning and they passed so close to you that you should have been seen. But I remember you had a hard struggle with your amusement, in trying to be angry with me.

It was more interesting to see the town from that hill than to be in it. We noticed with surprise that Cahors is smaller than the site it occupies, and is bordered with garden-fields on the west and south. The real town is displaced towards the north-east quadrant of the site. And how easily a sniper, hidden among the rocks up here, could subdue the whole garrison of the turreted bridge! Even a few archers ambuscaded in the bushes might have proved irritating. But Cahors occupies a site that was admirably suited for mediæval defence—the loop of a river.

A kind of site common enough in Europe, and later we saw Toledo, in a loop of the Tagus, the disposition of its bridges almost exactly the same as that of Cahors. Berne on the Aare, and Fribourg on the Sarine, in Switzerland, are similarly placed, but Cahors differs from other such towns I have seen, for it is on a loop that encircles very low land. The others are on bluffs.

But it is not only the bend of the river that makes Cahors a critical place. It is at a point that offers a balanced combination of easy access to the rest of Lot. We came in by a little, dry valley that leads conveniently from the hills of the north, and we were to go out on the morrow by another, similar valley that leads to the south. The town is thus at the natural crossroads of a north-south route over the highlands, and the route of the big river flowing from east to west. And the main axes of its plan conform to these directions. As with Etampes in Beauce, it is easy to interpret a small place if one can gaze down on it from a height. And as we gazed on Cahors, finding much beauty in its murky colour, the sombre hills, the red brick of the town, the open character of the buildings, the ribbed roofs with their brownish red tiles, the cypress grove in the cemetery beyond the old wall, the turrets of wall and bridge (cousins, it seemed, of the castle of Pelacoy), the green willows and cottonwoods along the river, we thought that it was not French—that it must be Spanish.

We forgot Cahors in Spain, as we forgot France there, but now that I have seen Italy I know that Cahors is far more Italian than Spanish. This little, tiled city in its deep valley might be in a desiccated Tuscany shorn of its olive groves; and indeed in Spain we found nothing like it.

We descended to the river, crossing the stone-bridge, to find with astonishment that it and some of the streets of the town are paved with river cobbles, a good and durable pavement if the cobbles be not too large. For Cahors has only limestone and the clays that form over limestone, and stones for anything so important as a bridge must be hauled from a distance—an undertaking that has become economical only in modern times. Little places have to build themselves from what they have at hand.

We passed the railway station, went through the open, western side of the town to the wall near the cemetery, finding that access to the cemetery is through an arch in the wall, and that people promenade there on a Sunday afternoon. We followed the straight line of the wall eastward, observing its thickness, its decay, the main gate and its turrets, the turrets on the eastern end; and we found that this eastern end of the wall stands on a bank high above the river.

That explained at once why the town has clung to the northeast quadrant of the loop. That part is high above the floods, protected naturally from them, as the loop protected the town from other enemies, and this, too, must have influenced its founders in the selection of the most suitable loop. And it explained why the pointed arches of the ancient bridge are so tall. And this is a thing that cannot be appreciated by gazing on the town from a high place. The southern and western flanks of that low bank of land must not infrequently be covered and swept by the high floods.

In this corner of the town, overlooking the long reach, there is an old house with sunny balconies and a sloping garden. We coveted one or two rooms in that house, for it would be a happy place in which to work, for people who work as we do.

But we had now made a complete circuit of Cahors, and we went back into the town, to the best café, where the patron greeted us as habitués. There was, at the café, an interesting family group, father, mother, daughter of about twenty, and a son in his teens, conversing with friends. You noticed the effaced bearing of the children; how neither spoke unless addressed; how both seemed to regard themselves naturally as having no part in the interests of their elders, deferring to the pleasure, the movements of their parents with unquestioning submission. We doubted if that girl had ever talked to a stranger except in the presence of supervising persons. In the boy I think we detected a policy of behaviour; he was conforming to the code of his people without any difficulty, but somewhere within him was a life that was his own. It made you philosophical, and it made me angry.

How often we had watched similar family groups in Paris and elsewhere, in cafés, hearing their conversation, studying their behaviour; watched them in the streets, among crowds; watched children playing in the parks. Everywhere was this class that worshipped a God of Perfect Behaviour, suppressing everything that was free and natural in the children; making them docile, submissive; concealing life from them; piling up difficulties for their later years of dependence on themselves. It seems evident that in France the boys of this class find their freedom in adolescence, through school, but for the girls life must present some nasty difficulties. Fortunately there are many kinds of families, and nothing is pleasanter to watch than a type that comes into a café and appropriates a table to pass a whole evening in gay conversation, father, mother, sons, and daughters respecting each other as responsible personalities. But the boys of such families are apt to be opinionated little prigs. The subject is too hard, so I give it up.

Our tea was quite good, but there was nothing to eat with it. We left the café to take advantage of one of those sensible French arrangements that astonish foreigners. We needed envelopes, and in France it is possible to buy many things on Sunday. And in the shop was a useful departmental map of France that I couldn't resist—you have it in Texas now.

We went aimlessly down a side street, and accidentally found a pâtisserie. We looked at one another and both walked inside, to buy a selection of the kind of cakes that are obtainable only in France. We took them over the eastern iron bridge, and went along the river to the north, to eat them beside a footpath that ran between a pretty vegetable garden and the river bank. We were very happy there, for the afternoon had been active, full, and satisfying, but it came on suddenly to rain, though not very hard, and we walked back towards the town. There were suburban houses along a road near that reach, habitable places, with palms and tulips in their gardens, and pergolas covered with climbing roses, wistaria, and other vines. I know houses just like them in Sydney, but on the walls of too many of these there were marks and dates recording the height and year of floods.

After the tourists had stared us out of countenance at dinner that night we returned to the best café, and were greeted as permanent devotees. Back at the hotel we folded our dry, clean clothes, fixed our packs neatly, and went to bed early. I don't think that we regret having spent two nights and a day at Cahors.

In the morning we bought cheese and butter at a small shop near the hotel, and then called at the post office, where there was no mail. We went out over the stone bridge, into the little, dry valley that leads south, with the railway to Montauban and Toulouse beside us. There were vineyards, stone walls, and stone cabins in this valley, just as there were in the one from the north. But we intended to forsake Route Nationale No. 20, and the railway, for the more direct though less frequented Grand Chemin No. 12.

Responsibility for the maintenance of roads in France is delegated to various bodies. The main highways uniting the big cities, and roads of international importance, are maintained by the State and are called Routes Nationales. The Lincoln Highway of the United States shows an American tendency in this direction. Roads between big places of secondary importance are the responsibility of the departments and are called Grands Chemins in the south, and Routes départementales in the north. They correspond to your concrete State Highway No. 15, that leads you home from Dallas after a night out. The lesser roads between villages are supervised by the communes and are called Chemins communaux.

We were uncertain about the turnoff to G.C.12, and asked for directions at a garage up the valley. The information was given rudely and wrongly, but we found the road without trouble. Vineyards persisted along the new road for several miles, and there were men and women working in some of them, bending to hoes and spades. Some of these vineyards, however, were unkempt, abandoned. One in particular I remember, at a corner. It had some excellent stonework in the terracing, but it was overgrown with weeds, the vines had not been pruned for several years, and the stone cabin was falling into ruin. I remembered here, too, that gazing from the hilltop on to Cahors yesterday, we both thought that the town seemed to have been larger perhaps fifty years ago than it is now.

The road climbed up to sterile, open hilltops, barer than we had yet seen, and they became stonier as we marched on. To the west lay Labastide-Marnhac, with a large, institutional building that looked infinitely bleak even on this warm, sunny day. There was nothing to see, nothing to interest us, until we were nearly at l'Hospitalet, about eleven kilometres from Cahors. We heard a commotion of motor vehicles behind us, and the "Citroën Caravan" rushed past, a procession of seven or eight of the latest models of different types of Citroën vehicles, making a tour of advertisement through France. We were close enough to the village to hear them honking through, making what must have been a deafening tumult between the little houses. On the first wall we saw a large placard explaining this "caravan," giving the route and the timetable to which it would adhere. The Hamilton watch said that it was on time at l'Hospitalet; said also that it was nearly time for lunch.

It was a desolate little village, and looked as if it was half unoccupied. There were houses falling into ruin; houses that seemed closed, like Fifth Avenue mansions in the Summer; and there were hardly any people about. We saw a girl at the village pump and approached her for advice. She was a comely girl, no longer young, and she said that she could sell us bread and wine. She took us around a corner into a small shop where there was an older woman, and with great skill cut just the weight of bread we asked for, off a huge, flat, circular loaf, and weighed it on a large and antiquated iron balance. That loaf seemed to us broad and hard as the hills of Lot, and the girl told us that it weighed five kilos, of which we bought one. For the wine we had to accompany her elsewhere, to a cellar that contained about six very large wine vats. She told us a great deal about the capacity of those vats, how long their contents lasted, the local vintage, etc., but I was lost in contemplation of an old lady in the opposite shop, so, unless you remember it clearly, the economists must do without this valuable quantitative information. But after all, the main thing about wine is its effect on the palate and the spirit. Provided there be always enough of this indispensable beverage, I care little about the statistics of its production.

But the old lady was in a shop—was the owner of the shop, and she sold crockery and earthenware. The only piece of furniture in the shop was the chair on which she was sitting. There wasn't even a box for a counter, and the crockery was all spread out on the stone floor. There were stacks of plates, basins, cups, saucers, flower-pots, casseroles, glasses, all plain, all simple in colour and design, all, together, picturesque. I don't think she ever sold anything, yet the stock could have supplied the needs of every house in the village, but she looked very patient, as if people from Cahors sometimes came out there to buy their crockery.

There was matter for contemplation in this display of crockery on the floor. Was the old lady a witch who had laid it all herself, out of perversity, like so many eggs? What would she do if a dog rushed in there to take refuge from something like the "Citroën Caravan"? Would she refuse to sell us a brown casserole (unglazed) if we asked her for one? Could flower-pots be taken as proof that flowers grew in this country, and if so where were they? What kind of people in this poor, shuttered village used china bowls painted tomato red with large white spots? It was much more diverting that the volume of the vats, the number of vats to villagers, the number of vineyards to the village, the number of villages to the vintage—but I am afraid my mind sings of "the viol, the violet and the vine."

We lunched on a tiny triangular meadow at a crossroads, a kilometre south of l'Hospitalet. Our meadow was green, and there were some bushes and a tree or two beside the road, but the country was forbidding as a barbed wire entanglement. We found some of our clothes not quite as dry as we had thought, so we spread them out on the grass. An old man walked past without a word, but he stared hard, interested by the sight of our white underwear. But an inhabitant of Lot might well be puzzled over clothes obviously spread out to dry on a sunny day, but in a waterless land. The girl of the pump also passed in a rickety cart, on the side road to Granejouls, an unbelievable place hidden from us by the hills and therefore having no possible existence except on the map. She did not see us, but the wine she sold was good, rather murky in colour and woody in flavour; and the bread was rendered palatable by the expensive luxury of butter. We enjoyed that lunch on the tiny, green meadow.

After lunch we walked for an hour and a half without seeing a village. We were having a spell under a shelter of poles and boughs in the corner of a ploughed field, at a place where the road passes under the lee of the hill and has a real, wooded valley on the west. As we prepared to move the gendarmes rode around a bend from the south. They descended upon the quarry with fearful looks, and were politely offered cartes d'identité and passports before they said a word. It saved them from having to change from an officious, accusing tone to a polite one, for they examined the papers in silence and handed them back with conversational enquiries about our destination. The project interested them, and they wanted to know what we thought of the country we were in. We said that Lot was dry and forbidding, and they agreed, but assured us that it was much better further south. One of them added: "Wait until you get to Spain—you'll find things very different from France there.—Vous y verrez une très grande différence." We said that we hoped so, but the worthy gendarme took it not offensively. They watched us as we moved off, a little doubtful, but the papers were in order. We were always a sad disappointment to the gendarmes, I fear.

As soon as we got around the bend we found ourselves in better country, following a green, dry valley to the south-south-west, gradually descending to its floor, and then entering the much larger valley of the Barguelonne, the first of a series of little streams flowing south-west to the Garonne. Looking back from this rich valley we could see that the limestone formed only a band or cover, making the tops of the ridges, and it became rapidly thinner to the south-west, where we could see hills that had no limestone on top of them at all.

And the conditions of Lot passed away where the limestone ended. We were still officially in Lot, but this valley was dotted with great, orthodox farmhouses with barns; it was rich in trees and hedges; there were spacious fields of wheat, and fields of green pasture starred with yellow dandelions.

We climbed out of the valley, for the road took us obliquely across it. Where we rested, at a junction road on top of the ridge, we amused ourselves by blowing "dandelion clocks," which greatly interested a little girl who passed. The road led us along the ridge to Castelnau-de-Montratier, a town on high, possessed of a fine arcade over one side of the main street, and guarded by gendarmes who took not the slightest notice of us. We went into a café there, but they had no beer, and we had to be content with coffee and cognac. The woman who served us was busy at a table, mending a large number of torn, dirty, disreputable five and ten franc notes with the gummed paper that surrounds sheets of postage stamps, and she left this money trustfully exposed while she went out to prepare the coffee. But the people of Castelnau are all of exemplary character, for the gendarmes have no anxiety, and, on the very end of the great ridge, is an imposing new church, that proclaims their goodness to the surrounding country. Not so Molières, on top of the second ridge to the south!

To leave Castelnau, the road winds in big loops down the contours of the high, green spur. We looked downhill, to the same road below, across tall, thick grass and long clover. It was too tempting. We broke through a hedge and took that slope at a gallop, like playful colts, and in two minutes we saved half a mile of curving distance by the road.

We sat down by a little wood beside the brook called the Lupte, and you entered the wood for reasons of your own. You came back somewhat torn by brambles, but in a state of enthusiasm, because you had found a nest containing four tiny blue eggs. Why does blue induce a kind of delirious ecstasy in people? We crossed the Lupte on a stone bridge, and climbed low hills, to descend soon on to a flat stretch of ground. We took our last proper rest of the day at a delightful spot. There were hedges of quince in bloom, and soft green grass by the roadside, and on the other side of the road from us was a white house with graceful cypresses like dark tapers before it. Other white houses near there had cypresses, but none so pure in form as these. It was a rich farming locality, and, except for the cypresses and white houses, reminded me very much of the country near Lostanges, north of Curemonte, that we had seen the afternoon your ankle was so painful.

Another ten minutes walking brought us to a slight bend in the road, the approach to a bridge over the river Lemboulas. In the very middle of this bridge we stopped with astonishment, for there, affixed, was a sign that said "Limite du Lot"! We had come to the frontier of the most individual department I have seen in France. We were glad, glad to leave Lot, for it is pleasanter to contemplate the hard, emphasised character of that poor land afterwards, than it is to traverse it. Even some of its own inhabitants seem glad to leave it. But perhaps, in spite of its lean aspect, or because of that, it was one of the most interesting departments we saw.

XVI

BRICK CITIES OF THE PLAIN

One step was enough to place us in the department of Tarn et Garonne. But this new, and truly southern department was very little different in appearance from the part of Lot we had just left. Across the river Lemboulas the country was flat for some distance, and ahead of us was a low ridge of hills; a rich country, green, fertile, well watered; a country that produces many things abundantly; the kind of country that raises great cities to trade its overflowing wealth.

Not far beyond the river there was a traction engine working a sawmill, and the men eyed us curiously as we passed. At the foot of the hills we turned south-west on to the main road to climb up to Molières, which we could see not far ahead of us. The late afternoon was exceedingly bright, and the road here was lined with trees that I call limes. They are low, spreading, shapely trees, with large, broad leaves that retain the lighter green of Spring foliage through Midsummer. I am singularly devoid of curiosity about the correct names of things, but somebody told me years ago that these trees were limes, and, except that I have never ceased to wonder that they should be so different from the citrus limes of the tropics, I have never troubled to find out anything more about them. It crosses my mind, however, that they are lindens—somebody else must have corrected my error. But how can an Australian ever become familiar with the names of European trees, European fish? The names of trees, fish, birds, flowers, dishes of food, and similar things that are local in their distribution are sore stumbling blocks in foreign languages. But, as I was saying, the late afternoon was unusually bright, and the sun shone straight into our eyes as we went uphill. The grass of the hillsides was alive with colour, and the linden leaves were vividly translucent. If I shut my dazzled eyes a dozen suns, burning discs, appeared in them, but they were the complementary blue, not yellow—so blue that they hurt.

And all this led us into a discussion of colour, and colour-vision. Do we, for instance, see exactly the same thing when we look at the same green grass? Do any two persons? It produces in us the same kind of feelings, so that we choose the same word to describe it—we both say it is green—but may there not be differences of intensity, even in quality, immeasurable, indescribable differences, that may make your life of vision a different thing from mine? In our discussion we hoped that this was not so, for it would involve much unfairness. Why should the eyes of some people bring them a more intense, those of others a less intense pain or enjoyment than ours bring us? Yet I am sure that sensory differences of this kind, and of other kinds, do exist, giving some people an advantage over me that I contemplate painfully and with jealousy. Don't you see what an enormous cavern of discussion it opens—that the gifts of inner life may have been bestowed with terrible unfairness in the beginning? It must be so, for we class people as dull and sensitive. I would far rather be sensitive, though it be the more painful as well as the more ecstatic; though fine instruments are more easily wrecked than coarse ones.

Oh, that fine afternoon! There was little difference in the intensity of *our* enjoyment of it. And, after the nature of such late brilliance of light, the air in the shade, in the shadows of things, was cool, cold. And Molières was shady.

The main street of Molières runs in a shallow depression. On the right we saw an hotel, and we knocked loudly on the door, but got no response. Then we noticed that the key had been left in the key-hole on the outside, and we accepted that as a sign that authority was temporarily absent. The town, however, seemed big enough to have more than one hotel, so we walked on, around up the hill. We asked a man to direct us, and he sent us along a street to the right, that led down, then up another hill. We found the "house with the blue front" of which he spoke, and saw the fat patron sitting in the café. To our request for rooms he made the blunt statement "On ne loge pas ici.—We don't rent rooms here."

It was doubtless a lie, for the native who directed us did so with friendly assurance, but the statement was made with an effrontery that was final. That patron didn't want to be bothered with us, and that was all there was to it. However, we expressed surprise, said that we had been sent by a person who seemed to know what he was doing, and asked where else in the town we could find lodging. The man repeated his statement impatiently, and added "Chez Madame la veuve Joulet on loge.—You can get rooms at the widow Joulet's place."

Sure that he had dissuaded us from any intention of troubling him, this insolent fat man decided not to let us go without satisfying his curiosity. He began to put all sorts of personal questions, and after a moment you tugged my pack, saying "Come out! Don't give that old bugger any satisfaction." So we went out, with no idea of where the widow Joulet lived, which was what I wanted to ask when the questions ceased. But I admit that they trained me to be far too polite to mere strangers. Again we asked a man for directions. He was tending some horses in a stable, and told us that the place was very close, opposite the Gendarmerie. But the house of Mme. Joulet, represented by a woman of about thirty-five, didn't want to take us. While we were talking to her the man who had directed us came in. We had conversed with him a little, and he took the woman aside, argued with her. Presently they came back, and the man said it would be all right, that Madame would let us have a room, and Madame added that dinner would not be ready for some time, and asked us to sit down and wait, as we could not be taken to the room before it was prepared. We thanked the man, who went out again, and we waited for a long time.

While we waited various people appeared; a mumbling old woman came into the room and sat down without taking any notice of us; two children walked in and out; we could see through a window at the back of the kitchen that Madame and another old woman were discussing and inspecting us, and they came singly or together to look at us through the window many times. Tables were prepared, one at the side, with a cloth, and a large one in the middle of the room, without a cloth. Madame came and asked us not to fill in the fiches, but to write the information directly into the register. This allowed me to satisfy a point of curiosity. I often wondered if guests were rare or frequent at these little country hotels. Madame's register was a new one for the year, and the only record in it besides our own names was the visit of a commercial traveller some weeks before! Small wonder, I thought, that the arrival of persons who want beds for the night throws these people into confusion. Yet again came the question, how do they manage to make a living? By selling meals? There are not enough visitors. By selling drinks? There are other cafés, and the town is small. Yet they would far rather we went elsewhere and did not trouble them! The rural hotel in France remains a thing I do not understand. The *café* provides drinks; the *café-restaurant* meals; the *hôtel*, nominally, provides lodgings, but many hotels assure travellers that they do not.

At last we were told that we might take our places at the side table. Evidently we were to be given special service. There assembled at the big table Madame, two children, three old women, the man who had pleaded for us, and another man. The men seemed to be workmen, but the rest of the group was "family." Yet, which of the four women was the widow Joulet was impossible to say. The young Madame did not seem to be a widow, and the children were hers, but we could not decide if the man who had persuaded her to accept us were her husband or not. He seemed familiar to the house, but, like the other man, may only have been a regular boarder. To suppose that the young woman was the widow only made it more puzzling still.

They served us the most disgusting meal we had in France, yet it was, in part, the same as they were eating themselves. It began with a soup, then came a dish of beans and sausage, the latter very old and rank. Thinking that this probably represented the meat course, we ate it, but found we had made a mistake, for the family all left the sausage on the edges of their plates—it was only a seasoning to flavour the beans. A large steak followed, for us, too large and too tough, and when it was removed we saw the dog on the table in the kitchen eating it from our plates. The bread was hard, and the wine full of insects. I discovered this by removing a mosquito from my mouth, but I said nothing to you. I examined my glass quietly, and saw a sediment of small wings and little horny bodies, and other gnats and mosquitoes in somewhat better repair, were floating on the surface. I think you made similar unpublished discoveries. The only thing to relieve that meal of its decayed quality was the excellent Cantal cheese, the best of its variety we had tasted or were to taste. It was so good that we decided to get some in the morning for our lunch. Like the tough steak, I think that cheese had been bought specially for the occasion of our visit.

The man who had pleaded for us conducted us afterwards to a small bedroom, where there were only one bed, one wash-basin, one jug of water—only one hand towel, wasn't there? The large building resounded with empty corridors and unoccupied rooms upstairs. But our room was clean, overlooked the street, and there was a linden tree outside the window. We were forced to empty the wash-basin (?) over that tree.

In the morning we forgot about the Cantal cheese, and bought no lunch at Molières. The road led south, over the little river Lembous, which flows to the Lemboulas, a switchback road over the rich, green hills, through pleasant monotony. This hilly country showed little variety, and the map, over this day's march between Molières and Montauban, was defective, incomplete. Leribosc, which we thought would be down another road and some distance from our route, proved to be a picturesque little town, boldly placed on the end of a spur, and our road plunged down to the lower ground almost beside it. It was not unlike the Castelnau of yesterday, and indeed the few large villages or little towns that exist in this part of the country seem to favour similar sites. We rested by a bridge over a stream that is not shown on the map, and we examined curious plants there, interesting only because we had not seen them before.

In a town of one street, that is not marked on our map, we had lunch, in a wayside café. Madame was at first reluctant to serve us, not because she did not wish to, but because she had no meat. But after persuasion she gave us a really enjoyable meal of fish and omelette, which was served to us by a little girl of twelve. Another much smaller girl who was playing self-consciously on the leather settee made violent love to you, at a distance. When you gained her confidence and tried to talk to her it must have been a sad blow to find that she could only speak patois. But you carried it off very well. A boy, who did not seem to be a member of the household, kept passing in and out through the front door, which, like the doors of many French shops, started a shrill bell ringing whenever it was opened. I have an objection to that kind of door, an irritating device that makes an unnecessary and uncontrollable noise. There were vases of dried grass, and two vases of yellow chrysanthemums in this café, an unusual effort of decoration, but Madame was an unusually pleasant and obliging patronne. We wanted liqueurs after lunch, and she explained that her licence was only for drinks with a low percentage of alcohol; that many liqueurs and apéritifs could not therefore be kept in stock, a fact that limited our choice considerably, leading you to Cherry Rocher and me to a "*fine*." Madame said that the supervision of this regulation is very strict, and that she dare not sell such drinks as Pernod, and many of the commoner liqueurs.

We spent comparatively little time at lunch, and set out again over the hills. They went right to the river Aveyron and there stopped suddenly. The Aveyron is a big affluent of the Tarn, and beyond it we saw the wide, flat plain of the Tarn, with the Aveyron skirting its edge beneath the hills. We dallied on the ugly, iron bridge, for this large quiet river was unlike others we had seen. It had the air of a great canal, with trees along the banks, a road beside it, and a big sawmill not far downstream.

The plain of the Tarn was flat, monotonous, orchard country, rich and yet dull, and we walked across it, through places that had names but lacked character, towards the depressing outskirts of a city. For Montauban was the first place we could really call a city since we left Bourges. After walking through the clean, fresh countryside for days and days, we had come to feel that cities are unfortunate products of human habit, inflamed spots in the tissue of human life that spreads across the land. Where is there a city with beautiful edges? Washington, Paris? To look at their outskirts is to renounce belief in the beauty of cities.

We entered the long faubourg two kilometres north of Montauban, some distance north of the point where the main line from Cahors crossed our road. We crossed another railway, that seemed to be on the edge of the city, but we continued for some distance through an area of scattered brick buildings of the most uninviting suburban character. We came to a part of the town that seemed old—a poor and dirty residential section where the houses are high and the streets are paved with river cobbles. There were two old women sitting on chairs in front of a doorway, and we asked them where was the centre of the city. "It's here," they answered, and we were quite sure that they thought it was, but how, we asked ourselves, could this wretched district be the heart of Montauban? We thanked them and walked on, to a kind of dry channel or moat.

The buildings looked better on the other side, so we crossed on an iron bridge that led us to a small, dusty square. There was a café on the left side, the tables shaded by horse-chestnuts in bloom, and we thought that beer under the trees might taste good after the dusty faubourg. We sat there, objects of some curiosity to the other people, and we asked the garçon where we could find an hotel close to the centre of the town. He pointed to the Hôtel de France a hundred yards down a street to the left, and we discovered that whosoever crosses the dry channel or moat as we had done, is at last in Montauban.

I believe that the Hôtel de France is one of the best in the city. The management accepted us in the grand manner of established and well-organised business, handing us over to attendants and chambermaids who put us into a huge front room on the second floor. It was half-past three, but before investigating the city I had to repair my trousers, and the sewing kit proved its value. I don't know why you looked upon this measure of precaution with such amusement, but the sight of me, sitting bare-legged and diligent, making sure of the safety and security of my garments, fostering our decency, put you into a mischievous frame of mind that filled me with apprehension. You are the kind of person who would surreptitiously ring the call-bell out of mere devilment, causing the chambermaid to appear unexpectedly and throw me into a panic. But you didn't think of it. Now, had the situation been reversed, I would have thought of it.

Before we went out of the hotel we studied its interesting architecture. It was a flimsy place, the rooms arranged around a great inner well or court, with galleries and light railings around it on the level of each floor, fantastic stairways at one end, and a glass roof. The whole of the interior was painted light green, and it was obviously meant for a decorative display of palms, but it was decorated with nothing. By common consent we called it the "Lafayette Gallery."

Montauban seemed to be an interminable expanse of ugly, red brick buildings and streets paved with river cobbles. By accident we passed through an arch and found ourselves in an arcaded square, a mellow quadrangle of old, wide arches of brick, hidden completely from the bustle of the town, quite surrounded by buildings, and accessible only through arches under the buildings at the corners. I like the heart of a town to conceal itself that way, but we were to see nothing else that resembled it on this journey—nothing remotely like it, until we found the broad, noble square of Salamanca, a finer and more beautiful thing in every way, but lacking the real seclusion and privacy of this little "public" square in Montauban. Under the shady arches here, were picturesque shops and booths full of strange wares, their dark atmosphere laden with the aroma of spices. There were brushes and coloured paper, coffee, nutmegs, fruit, the fine straw hats of Leghorn, the bright prints of Manchester, utensils of shining copper and tin, massive cheeses, bins of grain and sacks of seed, coloured oilcloth, books, and paint, all to be bought cheaply there, and we walked the whole way around to see it all, and to be offered much of it by the owners and by pretty young saleswomen who thought we couldn't resist buying from them.

Standing apart from other buildings in another small, open square, we found a large church or cathedral, the only considerable building in the city that is not made of red brick. It is built of light coloured stone, in the clumsy, mildly baroque style of the eighteenth century, and we found it to be whitewashed inside. We fled from it quickly to the eastern end of the town, where there is a boulevard of chestnuts, and the houses have gardens, with palms showing above the high garden walls. In an imposing, glassed-in café on a corner we ordered tea, and the waiter frowned on us in a way that acted harmfully on the tip he received. The café seemed to be a resort of well-to-do, if not fashionable people, among whom were a few officers, for Montauban, like every other large place, was full of soldiers.

Around the unattractive streets of this eastern end of the town we expected to find factories, but if they exist we did not see them. There were mournful institutions, large buildings for barracks and hospitals, a few places that were perhaps warehouses, and the streets had the air of being used by heavy, horse-drawn waggons and motor lorries, the feeling of the neighbourhood of railway depôts and docks, places where merchandise is hauled and handled. We went back to the curving chestnut boulevard, where an open-air market was being held, followed it a little way south-west, and found ourselves on a high terrace overlooking the public gardens below us.

We went in there, and at the gate asked two gendarmes the way to the Tarn. The garden ran along a brook at the foot of the terrace, the Tescou, a long, inconsiderable stream. There were many bright flowers, and rank, exotic plants in that garden, and, as we were slowly moving about looking at them, a boy in his early twenties approached us with a bicycle. He said the gendarmes had told him that two strangers were down there who wanted to find the Tarn, and if we cared to go with him he would take us there, and show us a little of the city.

He was altogether a delightful boy who knew and appreciated his city, and he was freely offering a courtesy, which we accepted. He escorted us to the river, and we crossed the Tarn on an imposing bridge built in 1918. Upstream was a low weir, and above the weir, on the west side, the artificial basin where the Canal de Montech leaves the Tarn almost at right angles, to connect it with the Garonne. The city is wrapped around an elbow of the river, so that long reaches cannot be seen from the bridges. We passed over into the western faubourg, a garish and unsightly district, and returned to the river by another street that crossed an old, red brick bridge, a beautiful structure with bold pointed arches on massive stone piers. On the city side, opposite the end of this bridge, was a group of old, red, municipal buildings that housed the artistic and scientific collections, and in front of one of them a fine piece of bronze statuary. On a foundation buttress of another brick building the boy pointed out a small carving, a head, which he called le Prince de Montauban. He took us between two of these buildings to show us an old red brick church that projected obliquely on to the streets, and he explained that it had suffered damage from bombardment in the wars of religion. It was late, and the boy said, with many apologies and regrets, that he must leave us, and he declined, very courteously, to spend a few minutes in a café with us before going. He rode off towards the western faubourg. He left us both a memory of a most gentle and generous politeness of a kind rarely extended to us—one of the few persons who took a little trouble for no other reason than that two strangers might find pleasure in his town. What was he, that boy? A young clerk? A workman?

The brick church was closed, and the building had only a negative merit, for it did not offend. I recalled to myself that Albi was not far away, and that the "wars of religion" that wrecked churches as far apart as the Gâtinais and Montauban were probably the wars that arose from the Albigensian heresy; the wars that led to the massacre of la Rochelle, the expulsion of the Huguenots from France, the establishment of the French weavers at Canterbury in England—a place that has accepted other gifts from nearest Europe.

We went west along a boulevard to look at the ruins of an old brick bridge that crossed the dry valley or moat where it joins the river. This dry valley, which may be partly artificial, an interference with a small affluent of the Mortarieu, a brook that flows along the north-east side of the town to join the Tarn away to the north-west, encircles Montauban on the west and north. With the Tescou on the south, and this hook of a defensive trench, the city must have had a secure defence in ancient times. We found no evidence that it ever had walls, but a large, well drawn plan at the hotel showed the city proper embraced by these features, naturally protected by the tortuous drainage of a great plain over which rivers can wind and run for miles in close, parallel courses without uniting. That plan suggested that Montauban never had need of walls.

Our volunteer guide told us that the place is one of commercial activity. We asked what it manufactured, and he said nothing, except pâtes alimentaires, little flakes of paste of a macaroni mixture, cut into fancy shapes, that are added to soups! I suspect that Montauban does other things though perhaps not many. The boy also said that the surroundings were very rich and prosperous, the seasons good, and the farmers well-off, in spite of the financial depression which was affecting the country. Yes, he said, business, commerce, might be in difficulties, but farmers were not.

Montauban sits like a star in the middle of its great plains and the grassy hills that invade and surround them. Our map shows eleven great red highways and seven railways leading to it from all sides, and the Aveyron and the broad Tarn, the southernmost tributary of the Garonne, that brings its water from the flanks of the Massif Central, lead the trade of a great sector of the rich south to Montauban. Were Toulouse not so close at hand it might be one of the big cities of France, but Toulouse dominates the south, between the Massif Central and the Pyrenees, and has reduced Montauban to the rank of a vassal, rich and powerful in her own small sphere, but dealing not with the world.

We went back to the hotel, content to have found things that made this dusty red city a place to remember—to have found in it a person whom it is good to remember. The dining room was the most civilised apartment we had been in since leaving Paris, heavy with ceremony, dignified by the presence of officers of high rank. But two people wearing clumsy boots, their rough shirts open at the necks, can impress a waiter as well as any general. The mayonnaise of fish was more than good, and the Cantal cheese delicious. Coffee and cognac seemed hardly sumptuous enough, and for the first time in years I felt that I wanted to order an expensive cigar and smoke it for effect. But a sense of the ridiculous restrained me.

We went early to bed that night—it was necessary.

In the morning we went down to breakfast at seven, for we were to face the longest day's march we made in France, to cover the distance between Montauban and Toulouse in one stage. We had examined the maps of this low country, its long, straight roads and railways, its lazy rivers and canals, and concluded that the space between the two cities must be uninteresting, dull: that the best thing to do, as we were resolved to walk every step of the road to Madrid, would be to put this long stage behind us as quickly as we could. The map showed forty-nine kilometres between the two cities, to which we must add five kilometres of "city" in getting out of Montauban and into Toulouse, so that we walked fifty-four kilometres, nearly thirty-four miles, that day. We had walked thirty miles in a day together before, over rough trails most of the way, so we knew that this stage would not kill us, though it might be irksome, depressing, trying to the temper.

Petit déjeuner was served at a round table in a side room, where commercial persons were also drinking coffee with mannerless haste. When I paid the hotel bill I gave Madame 10 per cent. on the amount, which she accepted gracefully, for the "service." Once outside the hotel we examined the items of the bill, out of tardy curiosity (for the amount had been reasonable), to find that it already included the ten per cent.! Madame must have known. But I admired her for a cool manner that should make her a rich woman some day. But thenceforth we examined all bills before paying them, as we had learnt to do in wicked Paris.

In the western faubourg we bought some rolls and chocolate, then we turned on to our familiar Route Nationale No. 20, that led southward. It was lined with trees, and after a kilometre there were green fields beside us. An officer and his batman rode past us, he looking very important for a captain, and I felt like telling him that I too was a captain, in "undress" at the time, but just as gorgeous as he when they are all on, especially in the matter of boots. But he rode past looking as if we had an unpleasant odour—an assumption of bearing that is common to rank.

At our first halt we ate the rolls and chocolate. "Best" hotels effect curious economies, and the one at Montauban economised on petits déjeuners. We liked milk with our coffee and butter with our rolls in the mornings, for we found that such additions enabled us to walk eighteen kilometres or so before lunch without fatigue. If we did not have them lunch had to be earlier, for the effects of lightness and hunger were noticeable. So we contemplated our fifty-four kilometres, and bought rolls and chocolate. While sitting there a group of rough-looking workmen passed, really untrustworthy persons, to judge from appearances. And the odd behaviour of a white dog interested us. The poor animal was evidently lost and frightened, and he wanted to go down the road but was too scared to pass us. We gave him what encouragement we could, and at last he went around us, keeping an even distance, then, safely past, he dashed away down the road as fast as a tired dog could go.

Not far past here we turned into another road, G.C. 13, and there were some fine houses at the corner, villas of rich people of Montauban. We thought this road would be beside the river Tarn, but it ran through good, almost flat land, the river nearly a kilometre away to the east, and barely discernible through the hedges and trees. A black dog that we had not seen rushed savagely at us at one place, and an old crone we had not seen, who was sitting in the long grass by a tree, was just in time to call him off, a very dissatisfied and rebellious dog, and a dangerous animal.

At our second halt we saw a thick-set, short person, in shabby brown clothes coming towards us from the direction of Toulouse, a tramp, the only one we had seen since our first night out from Paris when we sat on the roadside in the dusk near Etréchy. He stopped and spoke to us in quite cultivated French, a plausible and pleasant old fellow. He said he had arrived in Toulouse from Albi, and was going on to Montauban in search of work, any kind of work, farm work or labouring. He accepted a cigarette and asked if we thought there was work near Montauban, but "supposed" that the purpose of our walking was different from his. The talk changed to the subject of walking, and he said that he did his sixty kilometres a day easily, starting in the early morning. In response to our astonishment he said that we, naturally, could not march like that—we were not hardened to it, but he found it not bad, the main thing being very strong boots, comfortable boots. His boots were old and tied with string, but they were certainly strong and looked comfortable. In quite a dignified way he asked before leaving if we could not give him a little help, and he seemed pleased with a small handful of loose nickel and copper, in reality an insignificant sum. We wished each other a good journey as we moved off in opposite directions, and I found that I quite liked the old man; he had a quaint dignity yet little pride, and a quick perception that placed us at once as amateurs who needed nothing and might therefore be justly expected to give—a conclusion which he implied very adroitly yet without the slightest urge or insistence and no offence of manner. He was the type they call the "old soldier" in the army, but his craft was open, direct, polite. I could feel his request coming and had no intention of refusing it. You too saw it coming, and were very amused at the neat way he deprived me of a little of our money.

When I commented on his excellent French you said you thought he was a foreigner, not French at all. You may have been right, for your ear is quick and sensitive. We have compared some of our faculties before, and your ears, my eyes, are the quicker. You generally hear faint sounds before I detect them, and I generally see faint signs, little new things before you. Now, why didn't we carry that investigation to the sense of smell? I think you'd win, but it wouldn't matter. And do you remember where we first made such observations? About opposite Peekskill, up the Hudson in New York State, on the Hendrick Hudson Highway, near a place where we found a small drift of snow, coarse as brewers' crystals, covered with leaves, and still surviving in a shady place in May! But in the old man's French I could detect no accent or intonation that might not have been native.

Coming along behind us was a man driving a black ox. We knew he intended to speak but we had no desire to answer his questions, so we slackened our pace to let him pass. He spoke, invitation in the tone, but we let him get ahead and did not resume our normal pace until he drove the ox down a lane to the right. Tramps are better company than inquisitive farmers, because they have a store of interesting things to say, and are philosophers.

At Labastide-St. Pierre, a place that is little more than a flat crossroads, the bastide, or château, a low building with small grounds, was practically in the village. The garden in front of it was a leafless grove of atrociously mutilated horse-chestnuts. They had suffered the greatest violence done to trees in the land of France, where most trees are trained to be false to their characters. They lifted each a spread of amputated stumps of boughs to exactly the same level, disfigured knobs of boughs, healed in deformity. In Summer they must have spread a flat roof of green foliage over the garden, a perfect shade, which the owner doubtless considered a triumph of artifice.

We met two women cyclists coming around a bend in the road near here, one carrying a long hoe very skilfully, and they both greeted us in a friendly way. And three kilometres south of St. Pierre we entered the department of Haute Garonne. It greeted us with an iron cross by the roadside, a memorial to a young girl who had been killed there in a road accident. I classified it with the violated horse-chestnuts, among things that make French taste an enigma—so faultless, imponderably delicate, in many things, in a thousand decorations, yet thoroughly banal in others.

We approached Fronton over the flat land, and Fronton seemed to be on a terrace, equally flat,but where the whole country stepped suddenly up to a level about fifty feet higher. The topographical relation was not quite so simple, for to get to Fronton we descended rapidly to the little Fronton Brook, which means that our flat land of the morning must have been rising gradually as we went south. By the brook, and a little to the right of our road was a bastide (I use the term because the southern bastide is less imposing in architecture than, and lacks the park of, the true northern château). We went a little out of our way to look at it and returned to the road abusing its turreted ugliness. Then we climbed up into Fronton, a big village, with a large grassy square on its east side. We entered a restaurant on the south side of the square, and found the family preparing a meal. Monsieur sent out for Madame who came from down the street and considered our wants favourably.

There was a long, side table with uncomfortably high and narrow benches, so we chose an uncomfortably narrow side table with chairs. On it was a vase of bright peonies, and I know no more flaunting flower. Peonies always remind me of slum girls decked out for a picnic on a public holiday. On the mantelpiece were vases of bright roses without pedigree, and in the kitchen was a healthy, comely wench. The bare, light rooms waved a kind of poppy beauty at us, and we hoped that the girl in the kitchen would serve us the meal. But Madame served it, a good, strong man's meal, and well cooked.

Leaving Fronton we got involved in mazes finding our road. We had to go around the church, then to the railway station, and follow the railway, which we knew must lead to the road. And this light railway stayed beside us for more than six kilometres, through vineyards all the way, for the higher terrace, though not as flat as it had seemed when we had first detected it, is vine country.

But the railway suddenly turned off to the left, and we climbed hills, to notice that we had abruptly exchanged both railway and vines for wheat fields; the terrace for ridges. At the top of the first ridge was Buloc, where the postman ahead of us walked slower and slower in the hope that we would presently catch up with him and tell him why we were such peculiar people, but we had a race with him to see who wouldn't win, and at last the postman turned his lingering steps towards the little post office, and we hurried past it, downhill.

At the bottom was a tiny place called Masseribaut, where a tall, spare old person in black, wearing a straight-brimmed straw hat with a low crown, became rooted to the spot with his arms akimbo at the sight of us. He revolved silently around as we passed, and from fifty yards further on, where we glanced around, we saw that he was still fixed there, staring hard. After another fifty yards we turned and looked again, and he was still immovably staring. We were a little tired of four hundred and sixteen miles of insolent public scrutiny, so we stopped, turned around, assumed the old person's own attitude, arms akimbo, so that there should be no mistake, and stared at him. Our mistake was in believing that it would have any effect. It had none—it even gave him a better view. After two minutes of immovability we gave it up, and continued our journey, hoping that the old person had been turned into a pillar of gunpowder.

We came to the river Girou, first of the brooks of the Garonne, and we knew that we had left the lowlands of the Tarn for lowlands that belong to Toulouse. The Girou had high, neat banks like a canal, and there was a group of workmen doing mysterious tasks near the bridge.

Entering the large village of Bruguières we passed by a convent where two young misses peeped over a wall and indulged in open flirtation with us. We rounded an S-shaped bend, and on the next corner was an old man roasting coffee in front of his shop. Opposite was a café with a narrow, shady verandah, where three women, in wide, floppy straw hats were working. We crossed over and sat down beside them and asked for beer, which the youngest brought.

They were an interesting and talkative group, but they worked hard at the task of making brushes while they talked. They explained the work without interrupting it. A warehouse in Toulouse supplied them with the perforated birch-wood backs, balls of twine, and cocoanut fibre cut to length. As they picked up each little bundle of fibre they caught it on a loop of the twine, then bent it double, and pulled the twine through a hole in the wooden back, tugged, passed it through another hole, and repeated the same movements again and again. It looked as simple as knitting, and required only practice to make it automatic as knitting. They did no more than attach the fibres to the backs, the rest of the work being done in Toulouse. They said they were paid by the piece and could each make about twenty brushes a day.

In return they wanted to know something about us and we told them we were walking to Toulouse. This astonished them. "But why don't you take the autobus?" asked one of them. "It's much quicker, and you can get it down at the corner at half past four." We explained that we were walking for the sake of walking, but this was quite beyond comprehension—people do not do that sort of thing. I believe they thought we could not afford the autobus, especially as we let half past four and the autobus go. As we went, we noticed that these lively, industrious women and the old coffee roaster were the only living things in the streets of Bruguières.

We went over the rolling country and crossed the river Hers. St. Alban and Castelginest were beautifully piled villages, on their grassy hillsides to west and east of the road, and at one place where a wood covered the side of a steep slope into a valley, girls voices floated up to us from below, but we could see nobody. Beyond here we lay down on the grass in an open field to rest, and I used you as a pillow. Men went by on waggons, but we didn't care who saw us, for we discovered that we were tired, and there was still a long way to go. We had already done our regular forty kilometres, but we took no more than our ten minutes spell there. When we moved on we found that to discover that we were tired made us feel tired, for we had not noticed how tired we were, until then.

Nine kilometres out of Toulouse we came to the vegetable gardens, exceedingly neat and intensive enterprises that somehow explained why vegetables should not be too cheap. And at Aucamville, two kilometres further on, was the tramline and the beginning of the faubourg. We rested here, on a stone bench by the road, and observed the deliberate trade of an itinerant tinker. He had a long, light cart overloaded with every variety of tinware, hung with buckets underneath, supporting a superstructure for the display of patty pans and egg beaters above. He rattled pans to attract customers, and we actually saw him effect a sale, for a woman whose soul ached for a bright new dipper came running out of a house, attracted by the sound of the jingling pans. I had always thought that street hawkers never sold anything and went home nightly in despair.

We knew that the long walk into Toulouse would be through dust and ugliness, through a lane of houses with diseased gardens, through increasing traffic with noisy trams. It was all of that. Three kilometres beyond Aucamville we saw a small crowd studying a man who had been injured in a motor cycle accident. The twisted machine was on the roadway and the man lay insensible on a mattress in a neighbouring garden. A little further on, where there was a view between the houses to the west across green flats to a wood, we saw a "sausage balloon" floating high above the woods, and there were the sounds of shells exploding. Every half minute we saw the yellow puff that turns to grey-black, of shrapnel bursting low above the trees. Doubtless preparations for the war to end war.

Trams passed, and never had we seen people so curious, for they craned their necks, and even rose in their places to look at us the better. A slow tram was an ordeal of scrutiny for us, and we felt the kind of resentment that makes people fight. When a couple of youths in a building shouted a derisive "Un, deux! Un, deux!" at us, I thought that you *were* going to jump over the fence to try to smash them. But where, in this endless tragedy of a faubourg, to rest? We chose the steps in front of an old lady's tulip garden, opposite a public pump. A frisky girl came to the pump with a large crock and an armful of lilac. She arranged the flowers in the crock, and arranged her hair with careless ostentation, and walked affectedly back across the street without having given us one open glance.

Where our road joined R.N. 20 again we encountered the octroi barrier across both roads, but the officials were not interested in the contents of our packs. We came eventually to the close bricks and mortar of the city and passed, between two monumental columns, through a kind of city gate, and at once crossed the Canal du Midi, which is hooked around Toulouse like a moat. Then down long streets, monotonous and unbeautiful, and around a part of the ring boulevard. Utterly lost in this stone hive of a city, we asked a policeman where we could find an hotel, and he told us, vaguely, to go further on. We went, finding an increasing pretension in the buildings, and at length, on the far side of a thoroughfare that crossed the ring boulevard, and to our left, you saw the Hôtel du Clocher de Rodez. With a feeling of release we went towards it, for it seemed to be our kind of hotel. We were at Toulouse, and the long road between the cities had brought more beauty and entertainment than we had expected. But oh, the ragged ends of that long stage!

A large room with two large beds, an alcove with installations of modern plumbing so new that the basin still contained plaster; a marble mantelpiece and a red couch; two big windows, and opposite, the Café de Cristal, a large, breakable building. Hot water! Off came the packs, and we threw ourselves on to the beds. How tired we were, how very tired. Fifty-four kilometres, and at least nine of them through town and faubourg. It was a quarter to seven. Ten hours and forty minutes walking, and nearly an hour spent at lunch and the café of the brush makers. We felt that we couldn't do that every day unless we learnt to be tramps.

But it was still daylight. There would be time to go the post office before it closed. Hurriedly we performed a rather extensive toilet, much to the relief of our feet, and, in clean socks, with our hair brushed, we felt not nearly so tired. The post office, an old building in a side street, was hard to find, and, when we were trying to elbow a way through the slow crowd, I nearly bumped the kind old gentleman who had directed us to it, off the pavement, when we accidentally met him again. But at the post office there was a heavy mail for us, the first of the journey, and it said that the outside world was enjoying an uneventful well-being. How dull other people's lives seemed to us then, and how quickly we forgot that mail!

The dining room of the Clocher de Rodez was crowded and a small child who brought all her toys restricted the space near us, but she was interested in us in a responsive way and her parents examined us closely and often. Our waiter did unnecessary services and curious homage, and seemed hungry for tips, but we remembered the bill at Montauban. After dinner we sat for awhile outside a café on the ring boulevard drinking our café-cognac and listening to poor music, watching the crowd, noticing that the number of soldiers in a town seems to be directly proportional to the size of the town. But we needed rest, and went to bed early, each rather nervously affected in a different way, both cautious in speech and behaviour, each withdrawing into a privacy of silence before bed. And then, quickly, to sound sleep.

Cities are places where things are stored, and in the morning, after taking coffee and brioche at a café, we went first to the money store for a draft on my letter of credit and to convert some of your dollars. The bank wanted our address, but we could remember the name neither of street nor hotel, and they tried to identify it by our description, until a superior reminded the cashier that, as we were leaving the next day, the information would be of little use to the bank. Now, Toulouse was the last considerable place before the Spanish frontier, and we wanted a small sum in pesetas as well as francs. But the bank had no Spanish money at all! We were sent to another bank that assured us we would not find a peseta in the whole of Toulouse, because the rapid fluctuations of exchange made it inadvisable for the provincial banks to retain foreign currency of any kind. But we were also assured that we need have no anxiety; we could be certain of getting Spanish money at Foix, without fail, because it was so close to the frontier.

The next pressing concern was my boots. The repairs made at Treignac had lasted well, but the soles were worn through and there were formidable mountains to be crossed. We were lucky in finding a shop called "New Soling" (it was spelt that way), filled to the roof with modern American machinery, and there, after a little persuasion, they undertook to repair my boots while I waited. As it was of no use for you to wait, you set out to reconnoitre and report on the city of Toulouse, while I sat in the shop reading a newspaper, my stockinged feet protected from the floor by another newspaper, myself an object of wonder to every customer who entered, and to every passer-by who glanced in. Some of them stayed glancing in for minutes. In an hour and a half, and for a sum of twenty-nine and a quarter francs, my boots were returned to me with new laces, beautifully soled and heeled, much better boots than they were in the beginning, for the repairer used leather of good quality. And presently you came back.

There was a light of discovery of your eyes. You had found and visited the Exhibition of Agricultural Machinery, the same one that had interested you in Paris months before, and you found the display in Toulouse very poor. Good. I would not have to go to *that*. But you had also found a church whose belfry had collapsed, and from your account of it I was convinced that you had been just in time to see the dust clearing. And you had seen dirt being unloaded from barges in a curious manner on the river, and wanted to go and watch it again. Evidently, as the priest on the Dordogne would have said, you'd had a fine morning. I took you back to lunch at the hotel, and we sat again in a café for a while afterwards.

Your adventures of the morning (what are adventures? Things that happen to people when others aren't there?) gave you a tactical advantage, and you assumed the position of guide for the afternoon. We went first to the Cathedral, an old, old, red brick building in a cobbled square. It pleased us in some odd way, for it has beauty without harmony. There is an enormous, fat, pointed arch in the western front, and the tiled roof is pressed close down on to the peak of the arch, sloping only one way, like half a roof. There are a rose window and two round windows within this great arch, a gallery beneath them, and an ogival western door. The tower on the north-west corner is rectangular but not square and carries one big bell in an open belfry. Behind the nave a great wing turns north, making the plan like an L, red brick, lofty, with a flattened gable of tile. Within it was cool and dignified, and in some of the chapels young priests were instructing classes of children. One of these grave young men looked fully at us, and returned our bow in a way that made me feel that we had exchanged some fine acknowledgment, that human spirits had signalled a deep fellowship to one another.

Behind the cathedral were some buildings of the University (one of the oldest universities in Europe), in quiet, shady streets, withdrawn and academic as a university should be. You led me thence to the fallen belfry. The street was filled with its ruin, and the end of the church was torn open, like the entrance to a cavern. Yet, there was a notice to say that arrangements had been made for the continuance of confessions and services. A few buildings in the side street had been crushed by the collapse of the tower, which seemed to have fallen, like the campanile of San Marco, on account of the crushing of the ancient bricks of the base, under the weight they supported.

We went from there to a handsome stone bridge over the Garonne, and found the river and the red city, with its unpretending towers and domes, imposing, seen from the middle of the bridge. There were crowds of people walking, assembling in a sports field over the river; and, in particular, there was a dense crowd in front of a red brick church on the city side. I asked a soldier what it meant and he said that it was the civic funeral of a baker and his wife who had been killed in their beds when their shop was crushed by the fall of the church tower several nights before.

The relation of Toulouse to the Garonne is similar to that of Montauban to the Tarn. It is wrapped around a sharp kink or elbow of the stream, so that the river comes close to the heart of the town, and the western section, held in the bend, is smaller than the eastern portion. We crossed into this western section and found it depressing; then, as in Montauban, went by another street to another bridge, passing by a large, free clinic on the way. The bridge was an old cantilever suspension bridge, badly in need of paint, the water visible between the ties of the trestle. From here I was to see barges unloading dirt, but work had ceased and the barges were moored to the bank, so that I never came to understand what was the fascination in the unloading of those barges. Downstream was another modern bridge, an efficient structure, and I decided, there at the river, that, although Toulouse was not beautiful, it was pleasing, because it did not strive to be anything but itself, a large, busy place, where people work feverishly.

In a quiet part of the north of the town we found a modern church of red brick, and we did not like it. Toulouse, it seemed, had few curious exhibits, things that would be adventurous finds, and as usual we were disinclined to go to the regular sights, like the Ancien Couvent des Augustins with its museum; the galleries, the public buildings. More interesting to us than its treasures was the atmosphere of this place, the feeling of its life, and that feeling was one of activity and toil, sweat in dust, among plain, necessary things. There was not a shop, not a café in Toulouse that had striven for "character." An honest place. The only deliberate self-expression we found there was in the names of some of the streets—they honour Alsace-Lorraine. Surely, the gesture indicates a goodness of heart.

We thought we had seen enough of the city by day, and repaired to a teashop we had noticed on a street in the shopping centre. A pretty girl directed us to the tearoom upstairs, where we found a pink salon. We selected a table near a window, and must have looked very out of place. They served us no more than a good afternoon tea, and we can record that between Orléans and that delightful bower called Sakuska on the Calle de Alcalá in Madrid, there are no true teashops in Europe. Although the staff accepted our foreign accent with understanding, a fat dowager in black bridled haughtily at our entry, and kept us under the withering inspection of her lorgnette all the time, plainly asking the world at large: "Whoever allowed those persons to come here?" I fear that we did not conceal from the lady the fact that we only found her ridiculous, and several times I thought she was going to choke with rage at the indignity of our presence.

We went thence to find a public bath, and found a plain, efficient one where a beautiful girl turned on the water, brought linen, and closed the doors for us. I am sure the window of my closet was treacherous, and that my nude antics were observed across the way. But steam on the glass is as good as a curtain. When I came out you were nowhere to be seen, but your door was closed. You stayed so long in there that I thought the beautiful girl must be there with you, for she too had disappeared. At length you came out, looking clean and shiny, and we remembered certain Kodak films that should be developed.

We found a druggist on the square that is called the Place Président Wilson, and his lady assistant undertook to make every effort to have the rolls developed and printed by eight o'clock in the morning, or to return them untouched should that not be possible.

Then we found that we needed note-paper, and had great trouble to find a pad that would at once fit the pocket of the pack, and not be effeminate in appearance, or scented. That took so much time that we were overtaken by the "hour of apéritifs" so we did the natural thing, joined the throng in an undistinguished café and sipped Amer Picon until dinner time.

At dinner we felt that we were tired of ordinary wine and startled the waiter by ordering a bottle of St. Estèphe. And during dinner it came on to rain in a fine drizzle. We regretted this, but I reflected that the few trees and the dusty lawns and gardens in the squares of Toulouse would look the better for it. Wondering what to do, we went to a café for coffee and liqueurs, and again listened to inferior music. The programme for that orchestra was one of thousands of items, all numbered, and was for the whole season, the list of each day, for the several daily performances, occupying one page. But, we wanted to see Toulouse by night, and Toulouse on a wet night would have little to show.

After an hour in the café we went out. We had our overcoats with us. We prowled.

Need I gloss the doings of two bored and frustrated people that night? I do not think so, yet I recall them with displeasure. How we made friends with a taxi driver in the Place Président Wilson, where there are horse carriages like those of Florence and Rome—or of Central Park, New York. How we watched people going to some entertainment there. How we found three women, a fat and a thin French one and a petite yet flamboyant Cuban, all comely enough. How we paid sixty francs for a bottle of champagne. How we found ourselves talking worthless nonsense to these empty-headed creatures to kill time. How we rejected their blandishments and withdrew, sickened by duplicity and dirtiness. How we walked without purpose through mean, silent streets; blundered into an unsuspected, large square where there was an Opera House—closed. How we found less interest in Toulouse by night than in any other city we knew, and went back to the hotel disgusted, glad that we were leaving in the morning. We understand why Toulouse is off the beaten track of tourists—it has little to show, is too busy just living.

The hotel, at seven o'clock in the morning, was deserted, and it took many minutes to find a waiter. After he had brought the petit déjeuner we had to find him again because there was a fly in the milk. And we had to find him still once more to pay the bill. He didn't like us, for we noticed that service was included in the bill. Outside it was showery, and we were at the pharmacy at exactly eight o'clock.

The films were neither developed nor at the shop. We made arrangements to have them posted to Madrid, and we paid the bill and forgot them. But they caused me trouble afterwards. You remember that they were not at Madrid; that we wrote to Madrid without result after we got back to Paris. Then, just before you left France, we consulted the provincial volume of the *Didot-Bottin*, which must be the best directory in the world. From it, with the aid of its map of Toulouse, we selected the addresses of four likely druggists, not knowing with whom we had left them. When you went, I entered into correspondence with the four druggists, and eventually received the films, which had never been sent to Madrid, and I also had an argument with the postal authorities over ten francs, which I recovered. You can always get things back in France, if you are persistent enough about it. It is a country where nothing can be really lost. I posted the films to you, a disappointing batch, wretchedly developed and printed and altogether put to shame by the ones that were done in Madrid. But I have never had films developed and printed with care in France, not even in Paris, though doubtless it *can* be done to perfection in the land of Pathé Frères.

We walked right across the southern half of the city in the early morning, and the rain ceased. The south of Toulouse, though quite commonplace, seemed pleasanter, fresher than the north, perhaps on account of the rain. A square of public garden that we crossed seemed delightfully innocent, perhaps also on account of the rain, perhaps not. Beyond it we came to the Canal du Midi, and walked westward beside it. We noticed, as a train passed on the far side, that the railway is electrified. We became confused in the ragged edge of the city, and had little idea of where we were going for some distance, except that our general direction seemed right. At last we saw the octroi barrier, and knew that we must be close to our proper road.

Now, this city of Toulouse is this much greater than Montauban, that into it come nineteen great red highways of the map, and twelve lines of railway. It is greater because the Garonne is mightier than the Tarn, but not only for that reason. The Garonne draws perhaps half of its water from the Pyrenees, the rest from the Massif Central. Of the innumerable parallel streams that rush down from the Pyrenees, not nearly all belong to the Garonne, whose southern tributaries come only from the middle third of the length of the chain. The easternmost of them is the Ariège, which flows through Foix and Pamiers; the westernmost, the Baise, which descends through Mirande, Condom, and Nérac. The rest of the Pyreneean water on the French side belongs to the Aude on the east, and the Adour on the west. Nevertheless, for a third of the mountain region and much of the Massif Central to shed water and lead routes towards Toulouse, is much. The city is also on the natural route from the Mediterranean to the Bay of Biscay, on the Canal du Midi, which connects the Mediterranean with the Atlantic and makes that route a real highway, one that passes Montauban only at a distance. So, Toulouse, with its red brick, and its paving of river cobbles, is mistress of the lowlands between the Pyrenees and the Massif Central from Montpellier to Pau. Strongly placed on the rich plain of the Garonne, she holds Montauban, Albi, Carcassonne, Foix, St. Girons, St. Gaudens, Auch, and Agen all in vassalage. The influence of Toulouse, indeed, goes far beyond them all, and the city deals and manufactures for a great section of southern France. It draws electric power from the mountains, and is striving to have the Garonne made navigable for modern needs.

At the octroi barrier autobuses were being inspected before they passed into the town. The officials told us we were on the very road we sought, not a red highway of the map, but a lesser road, chosen because it runs beside the Garonne. As soon as we passed under the railway we rested in a meadow by the river. There were two bridges here, one leading to an explosives factory on a big island, the other carrying the trunk railway. The supports of the latter, where the spans rested on the piers, were reduced almost to points, a device that would require a diagram for its explanation, but which we thought had something to do with the transmission of vibration. There were two women with herds of cows in the meadow, and a brave cat won our admiration. It wanted to go somewhere and was not deterred by a dog that was stalking it. The cat kept deliberately to its line of march, taking cover in the grass and studying the dog's movements, finally outwitting it. There was also a team of men harnessed to a barge, and labouring rhythmically along the tow-path like animals, a thing I had seen before only in Egypt. And out in the river a big dredge was at work.

When we moved on, and could see long reaches of the river, we found that a peculiar embankment ran for miles along it. Great blocks of stone with spaces between them, close to the water, suggested an unfinished and very ambitious scheme for massive embankment, or a novel measure to prevent erosion of the banks. On one curving reach was a seaplane, and beside the river a commodious hangar.

On its east side, on which our road lay, the Garonne was flowing close under green, pastured hills, whose axes ran, with perverse regularity, normal to the stream; but on the west the flat plain of wood and pasture stretched for miles. It seemed that Toulouse drew its grain and vegetables from the north, its butter and milk from the south.

For about a mile the road was lined with what might have been an aisle of superb sycamores, whose great girth and faultless regularity belonged to noble trees; but their entire tops had been amputated by the tree doctors, leaving only bare, topless columns, a sorry sight, indeed a tragic one. Not far past here, when climbing a hill, we overtook a priest who was walking in measured meditation reading a holy book. We saluted him amiably in the correct manner and got in return only a stare of amazement. Whispering a quiet "damn," we left him quickly behind. Priests, it seems, are not all alike.

The signposts of Haute-Garonne are inferior to those of other departments, and we were looking for a turnoff. We found one pointing to Vieille-Toulouse, a village three kilometres to the east on a grassy and wooded hill, and a name with fascinating suggestions of alarms and assaults in ancient times, and of a later safety that allowed Toulouse to migrate to a better place. The river here was obstructed by sandbanks, and the task of rendering it navigable, judging from them, will be a formidable one.

Soon after passing the sign to Vieille-Toulouse we turned imperceptibly on to the line of the Ariège, though it, and its junction with the Garonne, were hidden from us by trees and an expanse of meadows. But from the map we knew the change. About fifteen minutes more brought us to a decided bend in the road, and we faced almost south-east, turning our backs to the broad, strong, unhurried Garonne, to accept the turbulent, rushing, noisy Ariège.

We had left the great lowlands of the Garonne and the Tarn, left their populous, rich plains, left their familiar life and their unassuming, toiling, busy, and, on the whole, likeable cities of red brick behind us. And before us were the mountains, days away, but at last we could feel them, drawing us closer, closer.

XVII

THE WHITE SILENCE

Our guardian spirits made us miss the way. It was part of the scheme of the world, ordained from the beginning, that Maxwell McCullough and Marcel Aurousseau should miss their way at a certain crossroads in Haute-Garonne, on Friday, the 16th of April 1926.

We wanted to go to a place that was called on our map Lacroix-Falgarde, but there were evidently two places, for, at the crossroads, were two signs pointing different ways, one to Lacroix, the other to Falgarde. We chose the former and went for a long way through a linear village, went past it, to find ourselves on the bank of the Ariège, at a light suspension bridge, and the road on the opposite side looked as if nobody ever used it. This was all wrong, and we went back.

The wheelwright was at work in his shop, a wise-looking man, and we told him all about it. The riddle, he said, was not hard; Lacroix and Falgarde were different places, but the two communes had united, and we would find our road, the turning beyond the church, about a mile back.

We found, long before we got to the church, a road that ran between tall hedges, and the sign said "To Goyrans." We knew that we *must* go that way, no matter what the wheelwright had said. It led us up and down over the clean, open hills, this road between the hedges, and it led us to a hill that was higher and rounder than the others, and I was watching the line of its crest against the sky.

Suddenly I flung my arms up and cried out: "Pyrenees! Oh, Pyrenees!"

We were lifted to the top of our little hill, where a glory held us, for time, and life, and thought at once were stilled. We had sunk to the ground. In my heart I was kneeling on the ground. For the throne of God the Father rose into Heaven before us, gleaming and shining in the clear daylight of the world, a long, white silence.

Their perfect crests were seventy miles away. Their line unbroken ran to the opposite ends of Earth, two hundred miles of mountain chain, a perfect, perfect thing. And we, on our little hill, saw it all.

Oh, silence of the snows. Oh, gulf of distance unencumbered, rising pedestal of grandeur, lifting world, serenely resting peaks, and clouds of stillness, of that day.

Repose magnificent. Oh, peace and stillness, oh gentle the infinity of sky, oh freedom, freedom of that day.

Oh, valley dark, and white of gleaming drift, and vastness of eternity revealed that day.

Oh, glory now attainable, oh boundless gift, most intimate possession of the world, that day.

Oh day, that brought at last a thing more real than dream, a truth, a wholeness, a reality unmarred.

Oh, time that halted, that my life contain one moment absolute, one moment in the heart of God.

Oh stillness of the heart, oh calm and rest from utterly forgotten life, one moment's rest.

Oh final knowledge in the heart of me, oh last security of everlasting peace, revealed that day.

Oh, life of me returning, and the moment passed. Again—Oh life of me.

Wordlessly gazing, motionless, ecstatic, two men on a grassy hill in France, alone, unseen; before them, the challenge; within them, the will; beyond, the silent mystery, beginning of their goal. The world comes back to them so slowly, slowly. Reluctantly they come back to the world. They have journeyed to unutterable places, but life will not let them go. They are in warm bodies that can move. One of them is moving. The other moves. They discern each other. Their eyes meet. They recognise each other.

It is we.

Silently we arose, each knowing that it was time. Slowly and silently we moved down the gentle slope towards the village of Goyrans. An arm sought an arm, two arms entwined, the fingers touching, we silently walking.

There were people in the village. We broke the rapture of this experience that would never be attained again, broke it through fear of people, and became two persons walking along the road.

In Goyrans we asked an old man which would be the better of two routes and learnt that one was muddy, interrupted by streams that must be crossed. We took the other.

At the junction with the main road we sought was a farm-château with lindens, beautiful and peaceful, and the road went past, downhill. We came to our place of rest, amid the gentle, grassy loveliness of open hillsides, amid rural simplicity, and we rested more to think than to repose.

The music of bells floated over the grassy hills. In the west the village of Clermont showed nothing but the top of its church above a hill, and, from the fretted belfry pealing, came a sweet benediction.

We were just half-way to Madrid.

XVIII

WHERE GOOD COOKS ABOUND

DOWNHILL, downhill. It is one of the perils of emotion that it must always find a balance. Where had we been? To what level of the soul's firmament? There *must* be a reaction, and that, with us, is a thing to dread. I wondered vaguely, then asked myself more definitely, when would it come? How long would we have to wait? What would it do to us?

But our guardian spirits had arranged everything properly, for they knew that the pressure of feeling that we had experienced must be followed by a release. They provided a sufficient and innocent release for it almost at once. They led us to the most inhospitable village in the whole of France, where the inhabitants raised our tempers to boiling point. They led us to Venerque, and so saved us from doing hurt to each other.

Venerque was the only place where we would be likely to obtain lunch, and it was an hour or so past the regular time of déjeuner when we arrived there. We went into the first restaurant we saw, and asked for lunch. An old woman, whom I can honestly call a hag, said that we couldn't have lunch. "But," I asked, "this is a restaurant, isn't it? Why can't we have lunch?"

"Because it's too late—nearly one o'clock," answered the woman.

This was the first occasion on which I had found the time of day to make any difference to a village restaurant, so I said further:

"We don't want the regular déjeuner. All we want is an omelette, some bread, butter, wine, coffee."

The woman said it was impossible, which meant that she had no desire to stir herself to that extent. I asked why it was impossible, and she said that there were no supplies in the house.

"But," I asked, "You'll be serving dinner to-night. Haven't you supplies for that?"

"We haven't bought them yet," was the answer. Then a younger woman called out from an inner room:

"We'll cook you a steak—if you'll go and buy it."

"My dear Madame," we said, "we don't want a steak! We want a simple lunch, a salad, or something like that."

But no. The simpler the lunch the more difficult it would be to provide. They would do nothing more than cook us a steak if we bought it.

The older woman, who had been studying us, asked all at once—

"Are you working at X———'s?"

We had never heard of the place, person, factory, farm, or whatever X———'s might be, and before we could answer, the younger woman said rapidly:

"They don't seem to understand, so they can't be from there."

Then from the older woman:

"What are you—are you Italians?"

"No, Madame. Are there any other restaurants in Venerque ?"

"Yes, two. Further down the street."

"Thank you, Madame. Bon jour."

We thought we had finished with them.

The next place was a large building of several stories, and, although the doors were open, we could find nobody until we knocked loudly. Quite a handsome, middle-aged woman responded to the knock, and said she was sorry, but she only rented rooms and could not prepare us a meal. She never accepted guests for meals. However, she added, at the bottom of the street was a good public restaurant where they provided meals *at all hours* and we might confidently go there. We thought that this woman, whose manner was so frank and pleasant, spoke the truth, like the woman at the third hotel at Pontarion, so we thanked her and went.

At the third place, a big restaurant, the family and staff were about to dine themselves, but refused to have any traffic with us, and said plainly that if we wanted a meal we should have come for it earlier. It seemed that Venerque was an exceptionally punctual place that did nothing out of hours.

We turned, disgruntled, towards the village again, and sought a bakery, finding the shop open but unattended. We could hear a person moving about somewhere in the back premises, but whoever it was took no notice at all of the louder noise *we* made. There was plenty of bread exposed to view, so we selected three small, fat loaves ourselves, pending the arrival of someone who thought the transaction of business worth the trouble. At length, a stupid, dull-witted man came downstairs and into the shop. He made a labour of reckoning up the cost of three loaves, and, for conversation, referred suddenly to Germany and the War, some curious statement that had no connection with anything, but we went out before he had time to extend it to intelligible length.

The people at the grocery store opposite were very independent about serving us, and slowly sold us butter and cheese, as if they were granting us a favour that we had no right to ask. From the few words in undertone that passed between the man and the girl when she went to ask him what we should be charged, I conclude that we were charged by an estimate of what they thought they could get, not according to the weight and value of our purchase.

We went to a cake shop close by, for a small addition to our plain lunch. There was very little from which to choose, and I dropped a half franc on the floor and lost sight of it. The two simple women there, however, were so pleasant over their tiny sale and their efforts to find the coin, that we told them to take no more trouble—to keep it if they found it. They seemed astonished at the generosity of two shabby people who could afford to lose a half franc, but their attempts to find it ceased at once.

The purchase of wine was humiliating. The old hag was at her door when we came back up the street, and we exchanged scowls with her. But she was the only vendor of wine in Venerque, and we had to go back to her. She accepted us without feeling, but the younger woman offered us a kind of congratulation on our having found good sense.

"Ah," she said, "now you're asking for something we *can* sell you. Wine, yes. But food, no."

We ignored the remark, but the old woman also began to talk and question.

"Are you Swiss?"

"No."

"Um. Spanish?"

"No."

"Are you working in the district?"

"No."

"You are looking for work in the district?"

"No."

She gave it up, and you winked at me with wicked approval and wanted to burst out laughing. I think she was the only person in France to question us without extracting at least a little information.

We took our lunch away from the uncharitable, surly town of Venerque, over beyond a brook that flowed to the Ariège and selected a grassy spot under a hedge of brambles on the high, red bank near the bridge. We had hardly begun to eat it when a light rain started. We spread one coat on the ground and the other above us on the brambles and ate on. The rain did not persist, but an automobile, that had stopped on the bridge, did. Three of the four occupants busied themselves trying to make it go, while the fourth, a ponderous person, turned around in his seat and became absorbed in contemplating us. He looked just like a visitor watching the seals being fed at the Zoo, and you sent him a clear invitation to come over and fight, but it disturbed him not at all.

Damn Venerque and its insolence, its lack of common decency! We vented our feelings loudly all the way to Grépiac, because there was nothing to see on the road. And we decided to put this matter of hostility and inhospitality to the test. We were getting close to Spain. We argued that our unfortunate experience at so many places in France might be due to something inherently wrong with ourselves, our appearance, our manner; or it might be due to something that was French—a lack of sincerity and consideration in some of the people. Now, we said to ourselves, if things are the same in Spain, which please Heaven they won't be, we can reasonably blame ourselves—we must offend in some way unknown to us. But, if the people are pleasant to us there, we can reasonably blame the French—which we would prefer. Which was it to be? But it was disconcerting to contemplate. Would hundreds of miles of Spain show the same alternation of acceptance and hostility? If so, travelling would be difficult, far more so than in France. Oh Spain, we wondered, how will you receive us?

And during that hour you made what seemed to me a very sound deduction, to explain the particularly offensive attitude of the people at Venerque. We had heard, from the tramp we met near Labastide-St. Pierre, and later from others, that there were factories in Toulouse and its neighbourhood that were employing foreign labour, Italian, Swiss. We remembered the anti-foreign feeling that had grown in intensity during our months in Paris, and was still growing. We remembered that the curious asked us were we Swiss, Italian, Spanish, German—never, it seemed, did they suspect that we were American and British. You applied all this to the questions of the old woman at Venerque, and decided that X——'s was something that probably made itself unpopular in the village by employing foreign labour, and that Venerque had reacted by placing foreigners under boycott. It seemed a very likely explanation, and it made me wonder again, as I had wondered for months, what France would do if she were suddenly deprived of her foreign labour—of the Belgians in her northern factories; of the Spaniards who come at vintage time into parts of the south.

At Grépiac there were trees along the road. At Grépiac the river was very swift, but we thought it would be quite navigable for a canoe. We rested under a hedge, just past the last two houses of the village, and were annoyed by a yapping dog which stood in front of a barn and voiced incessant objection to us but did nothing about it.

Beyond Grépiac people were streaming along the tree-lined road towards us for miles. People walking, people in carts, people driving large, black and white oxen which were very clean and resembled Holsteins in their marking but not in build. There were so many of these people that it was useless to try to greet them. We could not understand why such a crowd of men, vehicles, and animals should be bound for so small a place as Grépiac, and much time passed before we discovered that they were not bound for Grépiac at all.

They were coming from Auterive. We did not see this large town until we were close to it, but it was the kind of place from which a crowd might disperse. We went through its narrow streets and turned to cross the river. There, on an open space of ground beside the river, and on the wide, stone bridge, was the explanation of the crowd. A horse fair was just over, the people were leaving, the unsold animals were tethered in rows, the booths were being dismantled. The place was littered with straw, hay, paper, dung, and fruit peelings, and it exhaled the peculiar odour of concourse that soils the open air.

Beyond the bridge, on the south-west side of the river, where we came again to R.N. 20, people were talking, lingering in groups, reluctant to go home. The gendarme, bare-headed, was riding round and round on a bicycle to amuse a child who was sitting on the handle bars. Girls and boys were talking gaily, older people were gossiping. How different from a Sunday crowd! In what way? A Sunday crowd is gay too, but it wears "best clothes" and moves up and down. This crowd was plainly dressed, clustered in little groups, lingering.

We rested on a big log just outside the gates of a factory, and watched the vehicles and bicycles streaming past, all going our way. A soldier, who was walking very slowly, took minute stock of us, but when we moved on we left him quickly behind. We had not gone far when we came to a bastide that was for sale. It stood in wooded grounds, inside a stone wall, and you found need to jump over the wall and disappear. I waited, sitting on a pile of stones by the roadside. The soldier came along, looked at me, looked up and down the road for you, and seemed so mystified that I could not help smiling.

"Où est l'autre?—Where's the other chap?" he asked. I pointed in your probable direction, and the soldier nodded, smiled, and passed on. He understood perfectly. And while you were away, I realised that my boots were very tight. The repairing seemed to have made them smaller.

The valley of the Ariège was wide and shallow here, a flat plain between low hills; dull, open country; and the long, straight road was dusty on this fine afternoon. For the weather had cleared, and the light rains had ceased, though they still hung like distant curtains around the edges of the world.

At the last halt of the day I had to take off my boots to relieve my compressed feet, and I was putting them on again as the gendarmes rode towards us and dismounted. I handed them the papers over my shoulder, and proceeded to fix the boots properly before I stood up. I was very tired of gendarmes. But these two men were easily satisfied, and obligingly gave us information. They said there was only one hotel in Cintegabelle whither we were bound, but they assured us that it was a good one, and that we would be received pleasantly there. Didn't they shake hands when they left us, these two men? I have forgotten.

Cintegabelle was on the other side of the river, visible from afar, a pretty place, wrapped around the flanks of a sugar-loaf hill that was crowned with cypresses. A long, side road lined with shapely young sycamores curled like a long fish-hook into the town, crossing the river on a new, brick bridge whose pleasing arches were uneven in size and shape. It was a quiet, peaceful place, a red little town, and it surprised us by exhibiting electric street lamps.

The hotel received us with unusual courtesy. The patron, a tall, youngish man in a brown suit, was an educated person, and he showed us just the right amount of respect as guests, and bore himself with just the right amount of dignity as host, naturally, without affectation. We were neither neglected nor pestered there; we were asked no questions about ourselves, but enough about our wishes to convince us that intelligent measures were invisibly working for our comfort. The landlord regretted that he could not conduct us to a room until one was prepared, but he relieved us of our packs. We then sat in the café and drank beer.

It was early evening, and daylight would last for an hour longer. Just as we had made up our minds to go out, the landlord came across to us and said: "Messieurs, si vous êtes des touristes je vous recommande l'église, qui possède une des plus belles orgues de toute la France.—If you are tourists, gentlemen, the church is the best thing here—it has one of the finest organs in France." We thanked him, and went at once to see this church.

The streets of the town ran level around the hill and steeply up the slope, giving the place a terraced aspect. As we turned a corner a gendarme came out of the Gendarmerie and stood watching us as we climbed, uncertain whether to investigate us or not, but we ignored him, and he let us go. The church was partly hidden, for houses were built right against the side walls. It had a large covered porch, of a different kind from the rare porches of the Orléans region, and the two big western doors were of different form and size. The ancient, lower part of the brick tower was square; the upper, much newer part, octagonal. But the church was locked. At the presbytery we asked if we might be allowed to enter, to have the key if nobody could accompany us, but the housekeeper herself decided for M. le curé, that we certainly would not be allowed to enter, and she refused to consider the matter further.

So we turned, and went up the spiral path to the top of the hill, and sat under the cypresses high above the river, watching the daylight pass from the tranquil splendour of the Pyrenees. There was rain in the distance and it was windy up there on the hill. The mountains were beautiful beyond expression, but no more would they, nor ever again would anything else, lift us into the soaring oblivion we had experienced at our first sight of them. Only once in life could that happen, and only once in a thousand years might a man chance upon a view-point like the hill near Goyrans, chance to see the perfect revelation of those mountains as we saw them. For the place, the day, the air, the light, the sky, the wind, the sun's very position, the distant weather, the condition of the snows, had all been arranged for us as they might never be arranged again. And so, I will never go back to the hill at Goyrans, nor will I tell my friends to go there.

We returned to the hotel just in time for dinner, and said that we had not been able to get into the church. The landlord and several clients in the café were astonished, for the church, it seemed, should have been open. But they were sure it would be open in the morning, if we really wanted to see it. In response to our questions about the old houses built against it, the landlord said that they were to be removed, because the church had merit and should not be encumbered. The town, he added, wanted to remove the porch, but he hoped that they would not touch it, and was himself trying to convince them that it should be preserved.

He then came across to us, and consulted us about the menu for dinner. He told us what was prepared and asked if it satisfied us, or would we care to order anything else? It satisfied us admirably. We were then conducted to a lavatory, and thence to the dining room upstairs. It was a large room, dimly lighted, and there was only one guest besides ourselves. The meal, prepared and served with excellent taste, was worthy of the best metropolitan restaurants in France. There were stuffed artichokes, what we called "bisected eggs *garni*," roast chicken, a sweet course, good wine, and delicious bread. Nowhere in Paris had we found dinner such a pleasure as it was at Cintegabelle. We had coffee below and went to bed early.

The patron conducted us, by stairs outside at the back, to a second-floor landing, thence through a passage to a small room on the right. The candle blew out on the journey, for a cold, gusty wind was blowing, but once in the room we felt comfortable. There were a large bed and a very short and narrow one, too short for either of us, so we slept together in the bigger one quite comfortably.

In the morning, after coffee, we paid the bill and went to the church, electing this hotel to the rank of "best country hotel south of the Massif Central." The account was most reasonable—thirty-one francs covered everything, and we found later that, through an error of calculation, we had neglected to leave an adequate tip for service, our only regret at Cintegabelle. Nor did we remember the name of this admirable hotel.

The church was open, and the great organ was certainly a beautiful construction, though smaller than we had expected. But our host had said une des plus belles—one of the *finest*, and I suspect that superiority of tone is what makes it so.

We descended through the cobbled town and crossed the bridge, taking a flat, winding road with a dirt surface, loitering easily through the cool, misty morning, between hedges, among scattered farmhouses and ditched fields, where the grain was backward in its growth for the time of the year. It was showery, but not enough so as to force us to shelter, and for several miles we were accompanied by a small troupe of swifts.

We watched those birds carefully, as they darted and circled about us, never going far from us, ever coming back to flash close by, to soar ahead, and wheel back again. We watched them for minutes, for half a mile, and were convinced that they were the same five or six birds all the time—were sure they were the same birds. Undoubtedly, they were bearing us company, soaring, swooping, twittering, curving and winding around us. Beautiful spirits they seemed, winding and weaving some spell or charm about us, bearing it lightly forward as we moved, like joyous, living shuttles. Were we wrapped by them in some cloak of invisible beauty? Endowed by them with some necessary attribute for the continuance of our journey? I like to think so, and I like to wonder more, and to ask, *who* were they, those exquisite, flashing creatures?

We came, some seven kilometres from Cintegabelle, to the frontier of the department of Haute-Garonne, and entered Ariège, the last of the thirteen French departments we were to cross, just where our dirt road joined the familiar R.N. 20. But the swifts came with us still, and we do not know when they left us. We know only that in the outskirts of Saverdun they were no longer with us, and we were overtaken by a sudden heavy shower. They had not gone away—they had ceased to be visible, that was all; and there remained a feeling that they had given us something.

We were at our closest here to the old, dead fortress of Carcassonne, where you had so badly wanted to go. It lay sixty-two kilometres due east, nearly two days march away. What attracted you there? The romantic, annual fireworks? At any rate, you had given up the idea, but were talking instead of Barcelona!

Saverdun was a long village where two brooks joined the Ariège, a place that felt like a town, and we thought that the best way to shelter from the rain would be to have lunch in a restaurant. It took some time to find the restaurant of M. Marius Castéla, who told us buoyantly that he would give us lunch if we would only sit down and wait for "un petit quart d'heure—just a quarter of an hour." We waited exactly an hour and five minutes, amid increasing culinary activity and the assembling of guests.

But what a meal M. Castéla served us! We were well repaid for waiting, although, except as a matter for æsthetic pleasure, we had no desire for such a meal at that time of the morning. But it was something the gods offered, not to be lightly rejected. We were seated at a table with fresh, white linen, on one side of us two villainous looking Spaniards, on the other a foppish young man in smart clothes; opposite, at a table by himself, an old man in a blue smock; and there were other guests, not remarkable. M. Castéla talked to the unshaven Spaniards in Spanish to us half in English half in French, to everybody else in something, and, clad in white cap and apron, he served the feast himself.

There were the freshest of tiny round radishes from his own garden, served with bread and butter; there was saucisson—dried sausage; there was a pot au feu; a matelote or fried dish of a little fish, which, he explained, comes up the rivers from the sea, and is found three hundred kilometres up the Seine—it must provide the famous friture de la Marne which we ate on a certain day at Maisons Alfort. There was a dish of what he called "*roz con pollio,*" a savoury fricassee of chicken and rice. There were a steak, a salad, petit fours for dessert, and the wine and coffee were excellent. When had Paris ever offered us a feast like this and for ten francs each?

But M. Castéla was a real chef, and had practised his art in London, New York, and Winnipeg, and he had a brother still in America, in the Middle West. Truly, this man would know, so we asked for advice. Where should we stay in Foix ? He considered the matter with the foppish young man, who came from Foix, and they thought that gentlemen who appreciated a good déjeuner should go to the Hôtel de la Barbacane, which would give us entire satisfaction. "Don't go to the first one you see, it's no good," added the young man. And, as a piece of friendly information before leaving, they told us that there were three young English girls at Saverdun, staying at M. le curé's house, to learn French.

And, regarding them, you showed a flash of annoyance, not unimportant. I suggested that we call on these girls, never thinking that you would take the idea seriously, but you did, and were momentarily angry when I said that we had better proceed on our journey instead. But it was a sign that I understand now.

As we left the restaurant the old man in the smock approached us. He wanted to consult us. We all went out, and stood in the middle of the street, and I found his arm paternally around my shoulder. He was tall, stooping, and had grey hair and moustache, and a brown, wrinkled skin. As well as the blue smock he wore sabots and a small cap. Rather an arresting old person, a character.

He became very confidential; gave us to understand that he had summed us up as keen and estimable fellows. The idea, he explained, was this; he was a dealer in pigs—little chaps—a dealer in a big way, sending them as far as Germany. And he was anxious to have reliable aid in extending the business to other countries; to find capable people who would work up connections for him.

Now, he said, here was a chance for us, keen young fellows with a future before us. We could make a fine thing out of it by working with him, extending the business to England. There, "in *our own country* (damn!) where we must be well known," we could secure plenty of orders. We had only to send him statements of the required weights of the young animals, and for each order he would send a sample pigling, so that people would know exactly what they would get before they closed the deal. A fine thing in it! Oh, he knew we could not decide there and then, knew that we were on another errand, but, think about it, let him know—we would never regret, if we accepted the proposal. So think about it!

He forced a card into my hand, a card giving an address in Toulouse, and he studied our faces hopefully. I quite forgot that card, and was embarrased when I found it among my papers months later. What questionable doings of ours in Toulouse had my mind suppressed that I should have a forgotten carte de visite from there, the name one that could belong either to a man or a woman? I was quite relieved when I remembered this old man, and the proposal he made. It was no use trying to convince him that we were not English and knew little of England, knew few people there. The people I know in England don't want little pigs. He had to be humoured so we made insincere, evasive statements to the effect that it "sounded very interesting." We were strictly non-committal without dashing his hopes, and we changed the subject to inquiries about the road, and to amiable farewells. But I am quite sure that he expected to hear from us. Old persons like him, who buttonhole others and deliver a long rigmarole before the others can explain their lack of interest, are apt to be very annoyed when it is explained, angrily blaming the innocent others for the waste of time.

We went from Saverdun by a road on the west side of the river, for the dull and flat R.N. 20 here makes a wide détour. Our road soon became a mere track over the alluvium, the river rushing beside us between banks fifteen feet high, and no longer navigable for a canoe. At a farm on a wide flat the track ended, but the farmer and all his family came out to tell us that we could safely proceed by following certain signs.

We proceeded, and found ourselves on the line of a planned road, and we arrived at a creek with high, slippery banks hidden in a wood, and no sign of any easy crossing place. We took off our packs. You made a successful jump from a high to a low place on the far side, and I threw the packs to you. Then I jumped, with unexpected success. It was good fun.

We followed the line uphill and came to a climbing track again. As we mounted we obtained a fine view of neat, small fields on the river flats to the east. Near the top of the wooded hill the track became a Jacob's ladder of old street cobbles, and at the top were a few houses and a road. The view from here across the river was pretty, and neatly fresh. Below us, on the far side, was le Vernet-d'Ariège, possessed of a mill, a large, overshot waterwheel, and a roaring spillway like a waterfall. Wisdom said that we should cross the river again, so we followed a curving footpath down to a short iron bridge, to find le Vernet a village secluded from the main road, a place of single-storey cottages with large gardens. It was not far to the road, and R.N. 20 greeted us with an electric power line and a light fall of rain.

The main road was dull. The power line from the mountains to Toulouse ran beside it. Cars passed and passed; people who stared, passed, driving cattle; and I had no cigarettes. A rest among hedges and grassy mounds seemed to give you some satisfaction, but I had not been able to get cigarettes at the hamlet of Salvayre, and, moreover, I found that the soles of my feet were painfully blistered by the compression of my tightened boots.

We came to Pamiers, the largest place on the Ariège, a town with raw edges, factories and foundries, crooked streets, and footpaths that are irregular in level. We decided that beer would do us good, so we went into a café where both the patronne and her grown daughter were beautiful, and we drank beer from glass tankards. We liked things so much there that we drank more beer from different glass tankards. When we asked for the bill we encountered, for the first time, the patois of Ariège, for Madame said: "*Bint sous, M'sieur*," which is vingt sous, or one franc.

To leave this unattractive town we had to pass through a faubourg, where there was a good deal of traffic, and so much did we interest one man and woman in a cart that they deliberately slowed down after they overtook us, and proceeded for some distance at just our own pace, turning around all the time to watch us.

The road here was running on a terrace, well above the level of the river and some distance from it. My blistered feet were excessively painful, and I remembered an intention to have bought cigarettes in Pamiers. Conversation drifted to a low plane—always an indication that we don't want to think, or are bored. We sat on a heap of stones, and by the time we moved again something had definitely happened. But what? I didn't know. You, however, were silent and reserved for the rest of the way. It seemed that I had done something, but I was at a loss to understand.

That was a difficult hour and a half. I recalled your burst of annoyance at Saverdun; the probability that I was myself being poor company, for I was disgruntled through having no cigarettes, and my feet were agonising for minutes at a time. Indeed, we had decided at Pamiers that it would be wiser not to go right on to Foix that evening, but to stop at Varilhes and attend to them, rest them. But the discord of that hour and a half was as painful as the blistered feet. I concluded that it was most likely a faint echo of reaction, and was thankful that we had been able to blow off steam so vigorously at Venerque.

At length we approached Varilhes. I was not interested in its big trees, its handsome bridge over a peculiarly quiet reach of the river, its wide streets. At Pamiers we had consulted the Guide Michelin, and had noted the address of an hotel. We went straight there, only to meet an adamant woman on a curious, unoccupied ground floor, who assured us: "We never accept travellers here, and besides, the patronne is ill." Why in the name of thunder then, did she advertise her hotel in the Guide Michelin, and what had the patronne's health to do with it?

We wandered along the streets, and made towards a sign that said Hôtel de Commerce. Before interviewing the hotel I went into a shop for cigarettes, and left you waiting outside—you preferred to wait outside. An unexpected delay occurred in the shop, for a man was buying postage stamps; the old lady could not count very well and got her amounts confused; and a little girl, who came in after me, had to act as ready reckoner, for the old lady would not accept the man's own calculations nor mine. Then she served the little girl. So, when I emerged, I felt myself strongly accused.

The patron of the hotel had no hesitation in taking us to a corner room upstairs, one with two windows, and, as at Cintegabelle, a large and a very small bed. He bustled around to get us what we wanted, speaking a mixture of French and most laughable English, and soon we were in possession of plenty of hot water, and were able to shut the door. I attended to my feet straight away, washed them, pierced a large blister under each sole, dressed them with the powder in the emergency kit, and put on clean socks. Then, I was determined to understand what was the matter.

In response came an explanation, and we both realised that we had contributed to a misunderstanding. You had mistaken an unconscious movement or meaningless gesture of mine, one that I remembered only vaguely, and I had not recognised a significant gesture of yours, an approach, and you thought that I had deliberately repulsed it. Thus easily, was an afternoon made miserable—or, for me, more miserable. But, with the honesty we both desired, the air cleared quickly, and the incident was closed. But I still wonder if it had not an ultimate cause in reaction, as well as a proximate one in misunderstanding.

It was early, but there was no exploration of Varilhes, for my feet were too painful, and you had no wish to go out alone. We descended to the café and talked to the patron. He said that no meals were served in the hotel, and his guests all went to the first floor of the opposite house, where he had advised them of our arrival. And he too, very conversationally, told us that he had been a chef in London and New York, like M. Castéla, and he had retired to an easier and more profitable business on his return to France.

When we went to dinner over the way, we found another house with a vacant ground floor (a Spanish way of occupying houses, as we learnt later), and we climbed by dark stairs to a room where glowering people served us a plain meal on a bare table of heavy wood. We were sorry that our patron had not remained a chef.

The café of his hotel, that night, was a place of interest. Heavy, light-coloured drapes covered the windows and doors inside, and the room was filled by men, women and youths. The patron sat in a kind of pulpit, except when he was making the rounds to serve his excellent coffee. The men smoked, the youths played cards, and the only entertainments were talk, play and coffee. Some of the old men, and several of the youths were fascinating, attractive people to watch, full of personality, and they all spoke patois.

The host was enthusiastic about the patois of Ariège. Between the rounds he leaned over the edge of the pulpit to show and explain to us a volume of the works of an Ariège poet, and he gave me a copy of a journal printed in patois at Pamiers. This curious language bore little resemblance either to French or Castilian Spanish and only a phrase here and there was at all comprehensible, but, in the mouths of these gay people, who so thoroughly enjoyed simple talk over simple coffee, it was a very vigorous language indeed.

We slept, as at Cintegabelle, together, in the bed that permitted sleep, and we were wakened early by what you call "a crazy ringing of bells." The church bells rang there as I had never heard bells before, in a quick, nervous, hurried, irregular way that was most irritating, but we were to hear it many times thereafter.

For a poor breakfast over the way we were charged the extortionate sum of ten francs, and we both left Varilhes in high displeasure, and I with feet that were painful, though now tolerably so. But I cannot leave Varilhes for ever in this chronicle without one reference. Long afterwards in Spain when the place was mentioned, you said with a mysterious smile: "Remind me someday to tell you of something that happened at Varilhes."

"Why not tell me now?"

"No. Not now."

And the utmost I could get from you was that you would tell me when we returned to Paris.

Even in Paris I had to extort it from you, and I mention it to expose your wicked unfairness. For you deliberately withheld information, indicating clearly that it concerned me, and you withheld it in order to enjoy my discomfort. What had I done at Varilhes? Had I done anything at Varilhes? Not until Paris would I know, and perhaps not then, knowing you. And in Paris when at last you confessed, I found that, over a trivial incident at Varilhes, though the laugh was honestly on me, the guilt was on you, but you had slily let me believe otherwise. The incident being of the kind that constitutes a "yarn," I intend to insure its publicity by telling all your friends next time I am in your part of the country. Yarns have a way of circulating among the womenfolk, and the womenfolk have effective yet delicate and embarrassing ways of letting you know that they know.

Of that short Sunday morning's walk to Foix I remember little of the scenery. I recall that the river was in a real valley, and that there were many rocks. Rain overtook us and we sheltered in a stone cabin in a ploughed field near the railway. The road here was high above the river and the valley floor was formed of a complex series of natural river terraces of different levels, that were not persistent up or down the valley. Boulders and stones had been gathered into great, round heaps in the little fields, and vines had been planted around them, trained over them, to take advantage of the heat of the stones on summer days, no doubt. While sheltering from the rain we greased our boots for the last time with Diane, and abandoned the empty tin that we had carried so far.

We came to the Montagnes de Plantaurel, a barren chain of dull lavender hills, that rose from the land suddenly, an outer wall of the Pyrenees, but the massive layers of which they were composed sloped strangely inward towards the mountains. The river emerged from a V-shaped gap in the lavender wall, and at St. Jean-de-Verges we were at last right in the mountains. But I have lost all other memory of St.-Jean, as I have lost all recollection of Pierrefitte, though doubtless for a different reason altogether. We passed by a quarry and a lime-burning plant, and went for a little distance off the road, along the river bank. Then came a straight stretch of narrow valley with an old château on a projecting hump on the west side, the road, railway, and river all close together, the hillsides artificially terraced in many places, and at the end of the straight long funnel, a twist, and the ugly beginnings of Foix, the railway yards and station. We were disappointed, for we had expected much of Foix.

But we were disappointed too soon. For, once past the limb of the twist, there was Foix, close enough to trip over it, blocking the whole valley! And there above us was the great castle with its three massive towers, perched on a crag that rose in the very middle of the valley, nobler than the rock of Edinburgh itself, and placed like a stopper in the descending funnel of the stream. And stretching south, beyond the town, and stretching westward from it, rich and lovely vales of the mountains, beckoning, luring men to pilgrimage in the fastnesses, luring them to thread the torrents to their sources under the peaks. Foix, the little mountain capital of Ariège; Foix, a town on guard.

The river ran between high stone banks, and between it and the valley side was one single row of buildings. At the bridge we asked an old gentleman to direct us to the Hôtel de la Barbacane, but he said that the streets were far too crooked to give directions that strangers would understand. It was "over there," and when we had *found* the esplanade, the rest would be simple. Keep to the right, and the Barbacane would be facing us. We crossed the river, wound through handsome, narrow streets, one of which was the kind of street where tea-shops should occur. We came to the post office, and you went in!

It is characteristic of you that you make harmless arrangements and then carefully conceal them. I had arranged to have mail forwarded to Bourges, Toulouse, and Madrid and said so, to which your comment was that you thought "that would do."And here you were, asking for letters at Foix! There were none. But from such things I have learnt to be ready for you to spring mild surprises at any time.

We found the broad, shady esplanade, that separates an open, modern Foix on the south, from the old town that huddles about the base of the crag on the north. We turned to the right, and presently, behold! Four stories of grey stone, wooden balconies, a tea garden, a fountain, a garage—the Hôtel de la Barbacane, Foix! Looking proudly, haughtily out over the town! We turned to one another in dismay, and said together:—

"Can *we* afford to stay *there*?"

"They'll *never* let us inside *that* place!"

But Madame accepted us at once, and we were ushered up to separate, communicating rooms, each furnished with plain, efficient comfort, each owning a length of the second balcony, and *we* looked out proudly and haughtily over the town. We asked when we might have lunch, for it was one o'clock. "Quand vous voulez—Whenever you like," we were told.

We felt very dirty and untidy all of a sudden, and I asked Madame for a boot brush. A social error! Madame answered that she would send the valet de chambre at once. I had forgotten that there were such persons as valets de chambre. The absence of my boots and the presence of hot water enabled me to give my feet the necessary attention, and I found them much easier. But when the boots were returned, shining as they had never shone before, the problem was how to raise the rest of our wardrobe to their level. We did as much as we could—with a hairbrush, and went down to lunch.

The large, cool dining room received us frigidly, for it was a British Possession, and we had to walk the full length of it to our table under the well-bred inspection of the eyes of the English, the least equivocal eyes in the world, eyes that inform you at once that you are a respectable person, Somebody, or that you simply do not exist, Nobody. Having glanced at us once, the English ceased to be aware that we were in the room, and, as Nobody, we were able to regain our composure. But the waiter and the several waitresses attended to us with no less respect and despatch than they showed to the English, for had not Madame accepted us without question, and did not Madame know, better than the English? And they placed before us a meal simpler, but no less exquisitely prepared, than that of Saverdun. We were still, then, in the land of chefs de cuisine.

For I had been thinking over this matter of cuisine. We had traversed France from Paris nearly to the frontier, and only since arriving at Cintegabelle had we encountered perfect cuisine, and chefs who had practised their art in foreign lands. I remembered Louis, an old, old friend in Sydney, who enjoys such renown there that he has risen to be a "consulting chef," visited by the haute noblesse of Sydney when feasts and banquets are to be designed and the utmost perfection of art is required. And Louis comes from Perpignan. This, then, must be the land whence the great chefs come, this land in the shadow of the eastern Pyrenees. Perhaps it allows Provence, too, to rank as a land where great cooks are cradled, but certainly, Gascony and Provence would tolerate no rivalry from other parts of France.

We went out into Foix, and found that the promenade had already begun. All Foix was on the esplanade, so we turned towards the château fort, and went up the cobbled road that winds in a spiral from the base of the crag to the top. There was grass between the cobbles and in the chinks of the stone wall beside the road, but once, once, the horses of knights, the teams of the garrison, kept all grass from sprouting underfoot. The conciergerie was in the massive old gateway that blocked all approach to the castle. We rang a bell, the door was opened, and we passed through a stone tunnel out on to the top of the crag—no guides, no tourists; alone, and at liberty in the prison.

We went straight to the high, round tower that stands apart, the southern unit of the structure. Round rooms with groined ceilings, little windows and stone window benches in the niches, great fireplaces still showing the stains of smoke; and small side alcoves, all in stone, for sanitary purposes; were piled one above the other to the top. Some of these rooms had been used for important prisoners, and there was patient carving on their walls, near the windows, devices and dates, crudely and laboriously done, showing that men had been locked in here for years, as late as the eighteenth century.

The winding stairs brought us out on to the top, a cement roof, and we noticed that the restoration and repair of the castle were carefully supervised. There is a terrifying parapet around the top of that tower, built out, away from it, so that to lean is to lean across an empty gap, wide enough for a man to drop through and fall, grazing the tower all the way to the ground.

Descending thence, we went to the long, oblong keep, that has a northern tower with a slate belfry (locked, because it contains a wireless installation) and a higher, oblong, southern tower. Between them is a long, white, vaulted chamber, with an open, flat roof. The stone stairway that leads to this southern tower (the middle tower of the three) is unprotected by railing or parapet. The tower itself is a pile of oblong rooms, with vaulted ceilings, bosses like gargoyles where the arches spring from the walls, the same large fireplaces as in the round tower, and red, tiled floors with a black cross in the middle of each.

The heavy doors of all the tower chambers are made of four inch oak, studded with big nailheads, locked by massive wrought-iron bolts, and in each door is a small rectangular peephole. The doors of the round tower bolt only on the outside. The chambers of the oblong tower seem to have been the living rooms of the commanders and officers in residence.

There are many walls, defensive walls, and walls of ruined outbuildings, around the whole of the flat top of the crag. The outbuildings—store rooms, stables, dwelling places for servants, dungeons—seem to have differed little in architecture from the private buildings of the town below. Their roofs, for instance, were of tile. Useful ground was made on the top of the crag by terracing, and several of the little flat, walled steps are now the flower gardens and kitchen gardens of the conciergerie. There is a well and an old pump in the castle yard, right on the crown of the crag, and, with food in the stores and granaries, one cannot imagine the château fort of Foix ever being reduced to surrender by anything but siege.

Having examined every perilous, accessible nook of the castle, we turned to look at the gently sloping, brown tiled roofs of the crowded, tall, narrow houses below us in Foix. The top floor of every house, under the roof, is an open balcony at the back, and the old town seems to cling to the castle. The river Arget comes down from the west, and flows around the northern side of the crag to join the Ariège at its very base. The place is narrow, impassable.

On the esplanade was a gay crowd and the music of a band concert floated up on the wind. Down in the town, on the east, a bell was ringing, and when we identified the open belfry, we saw that the bell was going round and round, being turned right over, sounding four times in each revolution. On the roofs under us two cats were fighting, and there came, with the other, diluted sounds, the swirl of the two streams.

This was a superb afternoon, this Sunday in Foix, and we found the right way to enjoy it. We went to a grassy slope under the west side of the keep and lay down, lounged on the grass.

To the south-east was the vale of the Ariège, under snowclad crests. To the west, the lesser vale of the Arget, the grand hills cultivated to their summits. On all sides, neat, green terracing of the hills, vines; tiny ledges of garden on the valley side to the north, so close that we could have thrown a pebble into them. All the expansive beauty of form of the Pyreneean hills and mountains could be seen from there, through a honey light of afternoon. For the beauty of Pyreneean form, on the French side, is not ruggedness, but a grand simplicity of curve, that rises and rises, like the African Veldt, as though it would rise for ever. There are no prickly, raspy Alpine skylines, jagged and savage. There is a noble piling of mass upon mass, and ever higher mass behind, until the distance towers into the snows. We were looking at summits that rose four, six thousand feet above Foix itself, and looking beyond them to the mountain tops.

Do we remember a better afternoon, a deeper enjoyment of simple things, a closer sense of understanding, than that Sunday afternoon in Foix? We talked, as we sprawled on the grass there, talked gaily or lazily as the moments moved, talked about nothing, yet said all the time "It is good to be with you here, now. To be alive, to feel this place, these surroundings, this day itself, is good. But you make it doubly good." The state of being, the mood of those few hours was delight; entered, enjoyed, quitted, in gentle movement of the mind; like a fresh wind that rose and died musically; a pulse of consciousness that was free. Nothing disturbed it.

Other people came, and clambered about the parapets and ruins, ascended the towers, and we felt ready to go, to leave the castle to other people. A boy let us through the great archway and received the nominal fee. On the way down we discovered that the crag is honeycombed with galleries, and we suspected that it communicates secretly with the town below.

We went to a café on the esplanade and drank beer. There were flies in that café, and at the next table were two youths, such low fellows that we liked them very much. We watched the crowd, the officers, the soldiers, the men and women of Foix, walking up and down. The girls on the bench, flirting with boys who passed, a girl now and then accepting an arm and walking off with a strange boy. And the old gendarme on traffic duty watched us, kept us under observation all the time. A man passed by on a bicycle, a brace of rabbits hanging from the handle bars, and a second afterwards you exclaimed: "There goes the dog that caught the rabbits!" A brown terrier careering in breathless pursuit of him.

We returned to the hotel and washed clothes. Underwear that is also used as pyjamas; socks, handkerchiefs, when their number is small, need far too much washing.

At dinner we ordered a bottle of Beaune 1919, and you showed the first promise of a discriminating palate, a promise that was kept. And we were served, after a triumph of a dinner, a chocolate soufflé such as Marseilles and the Riviera would envy. To the English our table might have been empty, except for a dashing, experienced-looking girl in auto togs, who looked through our disguise with mild interest and then ceased to be interested. In another room a noisy dinner party assembled, consisting mostly of soldiers. When their songs were loudest we asked the waiter to explain, and he explained that the Foix garrison had beaten some other place at football and was celebrating the victory.

We went out feeling light-hearted and mischievous, and walked down the esplanade. It was empty. We went to where it ends at the river, and leaned over the wall in the dark for a long time, and in some odd way our tempers changed and we drifted into a quiet, almost reverential mood. A perfect night, I remember, and the strong river music almost hypnotic. The town so quiet.

You seemed glad to be alone in a bedroom by yourself that night. But the football victory kept me awake for hours. The boys came singing and shouting through the streets, one party stalking and pursuing the other rowdily, and they kept it up until two or three o'clock. It ended only when a stone hit an arc lamp in front of the hotel and the bulb exploded in the dead night.

At breakfast we were presented with a bill for a hundred and sixty-seven francs fifty centimes, and were quietly watched by the staff when we inspected it, but I am sure that we looked as if we always paid at least that much when we left an hotel to walk on to the next place. But it reminded us of our need of Spanish money.

Before leaving Foix we sought a bootmaker, who declined to stud our soles with heavy nails while we waited, because Foix holds a Monday market. We also needed the services of a saddler, and while we were finding him the narrow streets began to fill with a market crowd of people driving cows, women carrying bundles wrapped in woollen shawls, carrying baskets; and on the esplanade the large market building was opening to be filled with incoming goods. On the way, we entered a bank, and found that no bank in Foix could possibly give us Spanish money, because no bank in Foix had any. Oh, Toulouse! Was it the old French pretext, that we had so often encountered?—"Go further down the street," "go to the next village," or "go to the next town."

But we had one success. At the saddler's shop a Catalán boy sewed the straps of our packs firmly to the fabric where they had begun to pull away, and he talked wistfully in broken French as he did it, of going back to his own country—in the autobus.

More or less dissatisfied with the state of our affairs, but carrying a memory of a short, delightful, if expensive stay in Foix, we crossed the river and turned southward on the main road. Streaming past came the procession to the market, the women with shawls around their shoulders. We faced the mountains, the wilderness, leaving Foix behind us, the last little city of France.

XIX

DEVOUT LADIES

The valley for some distance beyond Foix is fairly open, green, brown, and lavender blue, and the hillsides are terraced. When we came to Montgaillard we were attracted by a charming little church that had its back to the road. We passed through the gate of the walled cemetery, and around to the front, but the church was not so charming within. Two things we noticed; a bell rope hung through the ceiling into a side alcove, and a door in this alcove communicated with the padre's house, for he came through it into the church while we were there. He rang the bell half a dozen times and then proceeded to arrange things about the altar, taking no notice of us.

We went out and looked at his house, a pleasant cottage with a high verandah, facing a brook, and among the trees. It was in excellent repair, that house, much better cared for than the church. Then, out through the village and on to the road, finding the railway cross it presently, to remain too close for our satisfaction.

We had left Foix late in the morning, and, when at a turnoff to St. Paulet, we saw two wooden buildings both marked Restaurant, we thought of lunch, and went into the plainer building. But the Madame who interviewed us took us into a small dining room in the other building, explaining that they were la même maison—the same business. A fire was burning in a stove near our table, and a black dog came while we were waiting, to tell us that he was a very good dog who accepted little gifts from generous travellers. We owe that dog an apology, because the meal, when at last it came, was a dish of radishes and butter, an omelette, cheese, wine, and coffee, served by a pleasant girl whom we naturally called "Mademoiselle." The dog lost faith in us.

We had just launched our attack on the meal when two slight, middle-aged ladies came in and placed themselves at the table nearest the stove with some ceremony. Um . . . British, without a doubt, though the French of one of them when she spoke to Mademoiselle was pure as could be desired. But Mademoiselle had evidently told them about us, for, at our first frank look in their direction, came the enquiry: "You *are* English, aren't you?" We explained what we were, and conversation descended upon us.

One of them, the one who did most of the talking, had been to India and Australia, to Sydney itself, twenty years ago, where a relative had held a high position in the Civil Service. She had stayed, she said, "near the big church," but out of Sydney's two cathedrals and score or so of big churches, we could not identify which one was meant. I suspect, however, that Church Hill was the locality. There was a pathetic effort to recall intimate pictures of Sydney, for this lady really wished to visualise the situation of my home, but memory was dim, and Sydney has changed in twenty years. To help us find something else in common they told us their name, F———y, a name well enough known in Australia, but nobody of that name was known to me.

They were eager to hear about our journey, our experiences, and were astonished when we told them that the packs had been hand-sewn in Foix, while we waited.

"However did you manage to get *anything* done at once in Foix? asked Miss F———y, and continued, "I know Foix *very* well, but I'm sure that I could not get anyone there to do anything at all, at once. You must have very winning ways of asking." This was flattering, but we thought of the many times in France when we had asked in our most winning way, and nothing had been given unto us.

The conversation had been quite personal, and they told us freely about themselves. They knew Ariège well, had indeed a family alliance in the department, French "in-laws," and were often at Foix. But recently they had been to Lourdes and were spending a few weeks at this quiet place after the experience.

Did we know Lourdes? We did not, so they gave us an intimate account of the original miracle, the growth of the shrine, and its present aspect—a really graphic account that endowed with life the many pictures of the place that I had seen. They described the pilgrimages in a way that impressed me with their magnitude, for I had not conceived of pilgrims from all over the world daily arriving and departing in this Pyreneean town in crowded trainloads. It was not clear whether the ladies had gone to Lourdes for a cure, or for less interested devotions, but it was quite evident that Lourdes, for them, was a solemn reality. At this point the elder Miss F———y rose and withdrew.

The younger one then became more confidentially herself. We asked about the efficacy of the cures. She said that there were, beyond doubt, many cures, after all other means had failed; that the most sceptical of incurable people, "like old army generals," were driven, forced in desperation to Lourdes as a last resort, and many of them came away cured, and converted to a belief that they would before have declared impossible. But, she said, there were a great many people who left Lourdes no better than when they went there. Then in a quiet, meditative way, she said that her sister believed absolutely, but she herself was not so sure. So—a true believer, and a believer with reservations.

She then looked at me openly, like a person asking for trust, and said:

"Do you believe?" I said that I was not sure, but thought not.

The answer did not offend, but it hurt this gentle lady, puzzled her, and her face said quite frankly that she wished I could believe —that I would then be happier.

Her sister came back, and the younger lady then asked us to excuse her for a moment. Little was said during her absence, but she returned quickly with a basket of exhibits.There were a new leather wine flagon of the kind used in the Pyrenees; pictures of Lourdes; beads, trinkets, relics from Lourdes; and green, transparent acid drops made by the nuns themselves with the water of the blessèd spring, and bearing on one surface a tiny image of Our Lady of Lourdes. They gave us a little tin of these acid drops to take with us; and thoughtfully they added a roll of recent numbers of the weekly edition of the *Daily Mail*, knowing that we had seen no English newspapers for some weeks.

It was time for us to go, and we said friendly adieus, these dear ladies wishing our voyage a successful and happy outcome.

But the younger one accompanied us from the dining room and asked us to wait for a moment. She returned with a new pocket New Testament in French, which she presented to me. She told me that she believed that some day a revelation would come to me, and that I must try to discover the efficacy of prayer. It was done with extreme gentleness, and I feel that, were I to have been in her presence for a whole year, she would have made no further allusion to the matter, though she would doubtless have watched me, hoped for me, all the time. And this kind of devotion I cannot help but find beautiful.

We went then to pay our account and discovered "Mademoiselle" changing a baby's napkin. In answer to my question she said that it was a little boy, "c'est un petit"—and hers! It was absurd. The girl looked far too maidenly.

We took to the road, with new possessions. *Daily Mails*—useful, as a packet of paper of finer grade in one of the packs was nearly finished. "Water of Lourdes Stone," as we christened the sweets. Well, we would give them a trial, to see if they would influence our virtue. We were just as unvirtuous after taking as before. And a French New Testament. I have it yet, and I find it diverting to compare such phrases as "très excellent Festus" with the "most noble Festus" of our English Bible. But my revelation has not yet come—or, I have had other revelations. But, towards the frail, grey-haired donors of these improperly appreciated gifts we preserve a tender memory of something so genuine that it is far too rare in the world.

At our next halt we sat on a bank of grass between heaps of stone on the roadside, and in the grass were the tiniest of alpine flowers. Among my papers I find a loose slip with the following notes in your handwriting: "Tiny things, no larger than a pin's head, fragile blue petals, and pink down in the stamens . . . a white flower of about the same size, with yellow inside—not a daisy." Exquisite inversions of infinity, those flowers, almost too tiny for any but your keen eyes to see, in the wider sense of seeing.

Along the high, walled road; below us, a factory; ahead, the village of Mercus-Garrabet, a village in a niche of cliffs; and on the far side of the river, Amplaing, on a little flood plain; and beyond it, rugged cliffs above the swift stream, and a very steep slope of purple talus on a rough hillside.

At Bompas, on the rocky slopes, were hanging-boulders, shored up by pillars of cemented stone to prevent them from smashing down on the road, on to passing trains that shake the earth. And beyond Bompas a level crossing, a bend in the valley, the railway passing over a bridge to the far side of the river. And then, Tarascon-sur-Ariège, a little town that blocks two valleys.

Now, Tarascon came upon me as an adventure. I knew that there was another Tarascon on the Rhône—I had even passed through it; but I believed that Tartarin, whose exploits I have not yet read, came from here in the Pyrenees, and I greeted the place as though it were a mythical thing that had suddenly become real. But I was wrong, mistaken, for Tartarin did not come from here at all.

For it happened that I was at Tarascon on the Rhône just a year after our picnic in the forest of Fontainebleau; was there by wonderful chance with Pauline and two others, and we had an anniversary picnic beside the Rhône. We sent you a commemorative postcard that day, and in the shop where we bought it were many books and pictures concerning Tartarin. And we learnt about the Tarasque.

The tarasque was a fabulous beast that plagued the city of Tartarin "once upon a time." This revolting animal held the citizens in perpetual terror, for it took to eating human flesh, and, as with a man-eating tiger, one taste was enough to fix the habit. But the tarasque became fastidious. Like the Cretan Minotaur, it soon found that any other diet but pure young virgins, youths or maidens, caused it to be violently sick. And so, it exacted from the terrified city a regular supply of this delicate food. And inevitably, of course, it had to eat far more maidens than youths.

The stricken town was desperate. In particular, the young fellows like you, who might themselves have been suitable food a year or so before, discovered that the simple measure they had taken to ensure their escape had only led them into an almost worse predicament, for soon there would not be a maiden left in Tarascon, and either they or the tarasque would have to go elsewhere. Or, what was more probable, the tarasque, a lazy, sedentary beast, would develop a stronger stomach. What to do?

In the nick of time it was all settled by a lady saint. She came along and vanquished the hitherto invincible creature just as it was chewing a virgin, and it rolled over, quite dead, half a virgin protruding from its bloody jaws, but alas! too chewed for first aid or for any other measures of resuscitation. Pauline and I selected three authentic pictures of the monster, and sent them to the Professor of Zoology in Sydney for his information, one of them actually showing the beast being dompté—exorcised, overcome, by the obliging, comely, and very self-possessed lady saint.

I regret that these interesting associations belong to no more than the name of our Tarascon. I misled you, but the sin was one of error, not of perversity.

But our Tarascon was a place where we must pause, and seek information, for here we must discover by which pass we could enter Andorra, and so reach Spain. I had marked a pass accessible from the right-hand valley that comes down from Vicdessos, the valley of the river Vicdessos, as the *shortest*, but there were others, and we knew nothing about them except that there was snow on the mountains.

We went to the Gendarmerie Nationale, and the whole staff interviewed us in the large vegetable garden, seven or eight men, some off duty, wearing loose blouses, others in full uniform. The commander came out, so did his wife, for many Madames in France command anything that their husbands command; and an old man, who had nothing to do with it, took up an advantageous position as a self-appointed observer of the ridiculous. We stated our problem. The honest gendarmes exploded into heated discussion among themselves, for were we not mad, *mad?*

Then the commander addressed us. It was impossible, utterly impossible, he said, for anybody, even the most experienced, to attempt the passes so early in the year. They were still blocked with snow, and not even local traffic had gone across them yet—it was far too early. In July and August the passes were open, but now, only ignorance would dream of going that way. We must go by Ax-les-Thermes and l'Hospitalet, on the main road, over the low pass, the only way we could hope to enter Spain on foot.

We demurred. We didn't want to go by Ax-les-Thermes—it smelt of tourists, and of people who "take the waters," and besides, the main road—it would be as bad as the train!

One by one they lectured us, solemnly, earnestly, and the commander's wife said what she thought about it. Each ended by saying "Ax-les-Thermes, the *only* way!" We asked what were the dangers of the mountain tracks, and they almost shouted: "Snow! Snow! The tracks are deep in snow! You'll not even find them!"

These good men had information about the mountains. It was their business, as frontier police, to watch the passes. But we still looked sceptical, sensing the exaggerated statements of caution. So, to give us the final word of dissuasion, one of them made a vehement appeal, ending with: ". . . et si vous y allez vous n'en sortirez jamais et—vous rencontrerez des *ours!*—If you go in you'll never come out alive, and besides, you'll meet *bears!*" He didn't know that he was adding inducement for one member of the party.

However, there was nothing else for it but to seem to defer. These men were concerned for our safety. Should we be foolhardy they would have to be responsible for us, two foreigners, because we had made them aware of our presence and intentions. We must relieve them of that. So, with many thanks, we asked them how far it was to Ax-les-Thermes, and where was there an hotel on the way. They said that there was an hotel at les Cabannes, and, as we left, they looked very satisfied, sure that they had dissuaded us from making a foolhardy and perilous attempt on the passes. Madame smiled and said we were wise to go by Ax-les-Thermes, for it still snowed almost daily on the heights—had snowed last night.

My respect for gendarmes was increased a hundred-fold by that interview, because they were not abusive, and were thoroughly in earnest. They seemed to be the most conscientious men in France. But had they dissuaded us? Who would think of going by Ax-les-Thermes if any other way were possible?

At a café by the shallow, hurrying river, a café that was undergoing repairs and painting, we drank beer, and thought about it. Then we crossed the pebbly river, went to a drug store, and bought what I call sticking plaster, you call adhesive tape, and the druggist called *plâtre dermatologique*. We saw our old observer of the Gendarmerie as we turned on to the everlasting R.N.20, that called itself now the Route Nationale de Paris à Toulouse et en Espagne.

We went out of little Tarascon towards Ax-les-Thermes, faithful to the Ariège, the railway, and the left. We passed by smelting works and flumes beside the road; we passed the round tower of the fortress on the little knob in the valley, an outpost of the great château fort of Foix; and we knew only that we were going to les Cabannes for the night, without Spanish money, without even a plan for entering Spain. But at les Cabannes we would see, for the worthy gendarmes had either counted on our ignorance, or they had forgotten something.

XX

VOILA LA FRONTIERE!

ABOVE Tarascon the valley was a long, straight trench, the shallow river winding gently through it, running almost due north-west. On the south-west side the great masses of the hills rose steeply, ranged back to the very crests of the chain, and only here or there, up lateral valleys, could we see a snow-covered crest. Mighty hills rose to seven thousand feet on the north-east side, limestone, lavender, and yellow, with here and there a cliff, a precipice, but covered almost to their summits with patches of green pasture, patches of small trees, and, on the very tops, a little snow.

A village here and there, perched in a high niche, in a cup of the hills, on a platform, spread its terraced fields and pastures up to the steeper slopes. Almost, one could estimate the area of this subdued mountain land that was required to support a cluster of a couple of hundred people.

From the villages of the valley floor terracing spread up the hillsides, and the narrow flats along the river were luxuriant pasture with many trees. But the bottom villages had no business, being towns apart, for they were an almost continuous string of houses. And they made the valley floor ugly with the signs of human use and exploitation.

First came the smelting works and the flumes, the arm that Tarascon sends up the valley. Then came Ussat and Ussat-les-Bains, occupying both sides of the river, collections of empty hotels, boarding houses, and mineral bathing establishments. Then followed a stretch of comparative freedom.

Forgotten things invaded my mind here. It was the 19th of April, my birthday, and I was thirty-five. So, on the biblical allowance, half of my life was already over. You were twenty-two—thirteen years my junior. What was I doing, lost here in the Pyrenees, half my life gone, walking the road with a man thirteen years my junior? Frankly, I admitted that I was doing, for the first time, exactly what I wanted to do, and finding it delightful; finding that I wanted it to go on for ever. And when had age mattered? I had never felt that I was older than you, nor you that you were younger than me. Age? There are the young, the mature, and the aged, and within those three groups the number of actual years is of little account. But at half way the years count, for an individual.

The journey too was half over. Would the second half be better than the first? Could I make my second half of life better than the first had been? Easily it could be better, and it *must* be different.

For I had believed in too many things not worthy of belief, and was finding only now the extent to which men deceive themselves, perhaps throughout life: was finding only now that a few things, and only a few, insist on belief, impel belief. Well, like the pass into Spain, I would see about it.

And were not my feet blistered yesterday and the day before? This day they seemed fit for the passes, easy, comfortable, and there was more room in my boots. Yes, our boots must have some attention before crossing—there would be time at les Cabannes.

Then we saw something that absorbed our whole attention; what we called a "robbers' castle" in the cliffs to the right. We went over to it, across the ploughed fields of the flats, up little paths of astonishing steepness and difficulty, to the base of the cliffs, and found a series of caverns that had been converted into chambers by walls and floors of old masonry—a fortified, natural stronghold and place of hiding. But it was in ruins. We went through the door in the masonry wall, and the cavern stretched far back into the darkness, but we could find no way to the upper floor, no way communicating with the neighbouring caverns, for the passages and tunnels were blocked with masses of great stones, and nearly all the woodwork, stairways and ladders, had disappeared. The only trace of men was a shepherd's fireplace outside the door. We went down the steep trails again—tracks of sheep or goats—across the fields, jumping over ditches, to regain the highway.

At Sinsat the railway gates were shut, but we passed through, for a train had just gone up the valley. At Aulos there were the frame of a new house and the burnt skeleton of an old one side by side, near the bridge over the little Aston, which is sometimes a torrent from the mountains. On the north-east side of the valley, in a hollow between two great hills, was the perched village of Verdun, and to the south-west, up the valley of the Aston, were the ruins of a castle, and a really habitable château, the Château Verdun.

Then we came to les Cabannes, a long string of buildings, a muddy and unprepossessing place, where the bells ring crazily. Three men showed us where the hotel was, almost the last place through the village. An old woman in black and a younger woman said that they could give us meals, but for a room we would have to go to a house opposite, chez le douanier, for the hotel was full. But they would arrange about the room. This seemed all right, and, as we knew very well the prices of things, we did not ask about the tariff. We went presently and looked at the room, a small room with one bed in the customs agent's house, and his wife, a pleasant woman, showed us how to unfasten the front door. We left our packs there and went out into the town.

The bootmaker, who was a short, round-faced man with a happy expression, studded the soles of my boots with round nails while we talked, but yours had to be half-soled as well, so he lent you a large pair of boots until they were ready.

This man wanted to talk about the War. He and his three brothers had all seen service and survived, but he had been wounded. He pulled up the leg of his trousers to exhibit one of those ugly shell wounds, a long gash and compound fractures, neither mortal nor dangerous, but agonisingly painful, which leave the bearer disabled for life. The French don't as a rule talk in a personal way about the War, and I don't understand the mentality of this desire to exhibit.

But we wanted to know about a pass that was accessible directly from les Cabannes via the Aston—the pass the gendarmes had forgotten! Yes, he said, nobody had been over since last year. It was rather early, but he thought that, if it were not snowing in the mountains, the Port de Fontargente would be open enough for us to attempt. A tough piece of work though, and we would need a guide, as we would never find the track alone. You were elated. We could get through! And as for a guide, stuff and nonsense! These people didn't know what we were made of. I was less sanguine, but obviously you must be handled with care.

We left the bootmaker, and went to a café, more to get another opinion, than for the coffee. But we chose a terrible adviser! An idiot of a man in a brown suit, who wanted to tell us all about his escape from Germany as a prisoner of war, and to make us understand the better, and to exhibit himself, he explained it half in the most wretched German. He had escaped from Germany across the Dutch frontier by night marches, using only a pocket compass and a small map. Oh, he knew all about maps! When we asked about the pass he became oratorical. He got up, stalked up and down the room, describing every feature of the track from the village of

Aston to the pass, insisting loudly that we must keep to the left, bear to the left all the way. "A gauche, à gauche, à gauche! Toujours à gauche! Jamais à droite! Verstehen Sie? Links, links, immer links!" He repeated this over and over again, loudly, close to our ears; or shouted it from the far end of the room. He wouldn't stop, and it became maddening. But where had I heard something like that before? Ah! the brown man at Guéret. "A droite, toujours à droite!"

When we calmed him down, and began to extract intelligent information about the landmarks, he gave us the full directions, and to our dismay finished by saying: "But it's impossible to go that way now. The tracks are under snow, and the pass is blocked." Oh, curses and damnation! Where, among these people, was an intelligent man who knew?

We went back to the hotel for dinner.

The dinner was plain, and at the long table were six or seven other men who seemed to be commercial travellers. One dark, massive, prepossessing man in a black suit attracted our attention. We had been discussing the project, and towards the end of the meal he turned to us and said in English: "You want to make the pass? It is possible to do it, but you must take a guide."

You looked rebellious at the word guide, but after dinner this gentleman, M. Rombergues, introduced himself, and talked to us. He was a mining engineer who came to the district once a month to visit the iron mines in the Aston valley. He knew the people here, and he knew the mountains well. He had listened to our talk, and advised us, as a man who appreciated what we wanted to do, not to attempt the crossing alone. It was possible to cross—a man who knew the country could do it. But for us, it would be risking too much to make the attempt alone. At the best, we would be driven back to wait for days, perhaps for weeks, for better conditions; but at the worst, we would be lost in the mountains, if we tried it alone. Now, he could get us a trustworthy guide, a huntsman. Would we take a guide?

This man, to me, was a sounder authority than the gendarmes. A mining engineer is a man who knows country, and between us was the understanding of field-geology. I felt that M. Rombergues knew what he was talking about. I looked at you. Your expression showed you fighting with yourself not to admit something—so, you too appreciated M. Rombergues' advice. I felt safe, and turning to him, asked what it would cost. "It need not cost you much. What would you pay—one pound, a hundred and fifty francs?"

A glance at you enabled me to say yes. M. Rombergues was satisfied. He undertook to send a boy, who would require a five franc tip, to Aston, to bring a person called "Tombell" to the hotel at nine o'clock. And according to the advice of Tombell we would attempt the Port de Fontargente, or resign ourselves to Ax-les-Thermes.

We went out. You still demurred a little, and I felt as you did, that a guide would be an intruder. But you accepted the situation after a little discussion, and characteristically said no more about it.

While you were changing into your boots we asked the bootmaker if he knew this Tombell. Tombell? Why, Tombell was a *brave chasseur*, no finer fellow or better guide in the country, for he knew every nook of the mountains. And the cost of being guided? Well, the bootmaker thought that Tombell might do it for a friend for eighty or a hundred francs. We must expect to pay more than that, but his charge would be fair. For, continued the bootmaker, at les Cabannes folks were honest, and would not try to exploit us. But at Ax-les-Thermes, well, that was a tourist resort, and the people were bad, extortionate robbers. But we need fear nothing of the kind at les Cabannes. And certainly the bootmaker himself presented us a most reasonable bill.

But goodness, how our store of money was diminishing!

The mention of Tombell, and hunting, caused the bootmaker to show us his own heavy hunting boots that he had made himself, for he too hunted in the mountains. They were great, nail-studded boots, even the edges of the soles protected with devices that reminded me of the flanges of an air-cooled cylinder.

Back at the hotel we were asked into the kitchen to wait by the open fire, where the sleepy old woman with her half-closed eyes, and the younger one, were themselves awaiting the arrival of the night train. They talked—oh, how they talked! With a countrified accent, sounding final consonants that are usually silent; distorting vowels. The old woman bemoaned the decay of France, her declining place among the nations—no children, drained by the War, and this extravagant, gay life. Over and over again she repeated: "*Les Frrancèss sont tropp orgullieux*," but I could not discover just what meaning she placed on *orgueilleux*—proud.

And she assumed that curious attitude of wisdom and the right to instruct, that nearly all older persons exhibit towards juniors—though what gives them such a right puzzles me. Seldom, indeed, does mere age mean true experience. But she turned to you and said in a tone of harrowing tragedy and warning: *Gârr-dez bien vos vinq deux ans, jeune homme!*" It seemed to mean "take care of yourself while you're young; do nothing to shorten your youth." As if that wasn't already the possession on which you *consciously* placed most value! Huddled before the fire, moaning over her country, this old woman reminded me of the dying Åsa in Peer Gynt.

But at length came M. Rombergues and Tombell.

A solid, wiry little man was the chasseur, who might have been any age between twenty-five and forty. He was very brown and wrinkled, his cheeks sunken. He had tiny, smiling brown eyes, a confident grin, and discoloured teeth. He had a curly beard of some days' growth, and a short, permanent moustache, and his brown hair was uncombed. His hands were especially rough and wrinkled, and the nails dirty. He spoke in a very decided yet soft voice, immobile, gestureless. Covering most of him was a great, dark blue cloak of liberal folds with a pointed cowl hanging from the neck behind, a Pyreneean cloak, of a kind we had seen before, in the processions of people at Foix and Pamiers. Altogether, the chasseur was a most likeable little man, who hunted and killed animals wilder than himself.

To our question, "Can we go over the pass to-morrow?" he replied "Mais assurément"—untranslatable, "Of course!" being about the nearest to an equivalent expression, but the most encouraging words we had heard for many days. For what this man said could be done would be done. It was all quickly arranged and settled.

Tombell said that there would be deep snow. We must therefore buy bandes molletières at an address he gave us—puttees of some kind, evidently. We must buy at les Cabannes enough compact food for two days. And we were to meet him at eleven o'clock in the morning at the inn at Aston, for there was no way of avoiding one night in the mountains. We would go gently, a short distance to-morrow, and sleep at the "first hut." The day after, we would attempt the pass. He went, our sworn friend, and we went to bed satisfied.

In the morning the douanier's wife bustled in. She had to go out, and the house would be in our charge, so would we please leave the money on the bureau if we left before she returned?

"How much?"

"Twelve francs, M'sieur."

We were taken aback, for the price of a better room than that was properly six francs. But this was a special arrangement in a private house, and we paid immediately, without argument. After a slender breakfast we asked Madame for the hotel bill. I was getting out my pocket book, not looking at her, but you were watching her closely. You said that her sleepy eyes became wide awake for a second as she rapidly studied my face. Then they flickered and went dull, as she drawled:

"Quinze francs chacun, M'sieur."

Good heavens! Fifteen francs each! Did that old witch, who knew that we had walked from Paris, think that we didn't know the price of a poor dinner and a slender breakfast? For a moment I felt like saying: "We've already paid for the room, Madame, paid double." But we both detest the haggling that ensues, the loss of temper and waste of time, to save a small sum. We paid her without comment. But Madame doubtless reasoned that, as we could afford to pay a guide, we had at any rate some money, of which she would get what she could. So, the "honest" folks of les Cabannes were just as grasping as the worst we had found in France.

We went out to make our purchases. Bandes molletières were unobtainable. We laid in a store of chocolate, dried sausage—saucisson, ham, cheese, and wine. Then we walked three kilometres to Aston, passing by the pretty Château Verdun on the way.

Aston was a muddy place, surrounded by little fields enclosed by stone walls, and trees had overgrown the old terraces of the hillsides. A woman from the inn, who was driving cows up the muddy street, told us to go inside and wait for the patronne. The small inner room was full of smoke and the window refused to stay open.

But the wall-paper was most entertaining. It depicted hounds in full cry, and Tombells of a past century pursuing ye tyger and ye elephante, and the hunted beasts looked as if it were all a huge joke.

Soon, Tombell arrived, padded in many garments, a skin flagon over one shoulder, over the other a knapsack with a waterproof coat under the flap, and he carried a double-barrelled gun. He was in high spirits, and scattered shot cartridge, from several pockets, over the table. You noticed among it just one ball cartridge, and asked what it was for. "Oh, in case I see a bear," answered Tombell, in a most off-hand and positive manner. He knew that the bear wouldn't survive the encounter.

Then the patronne arrived. She came straight from Mass, dressed in black silk, but in very little time she placed a heavy déjeuner before us. There were pâté, an omelette, a steak *garni* (we were sure it was horseflesh), cheese, jam, and the usual bread and wine. When we had finished we bought bread from Madame, and set off up the valley, heavily laden within and without.

We were now using a small section of the Carte Michelin, on a larger scale, and much clearer, better drawn, than the Cartes Taride we had used thus far, and the only convenient map of roadless Andorra we had been able to find. True, Andorra appeared as an open trace of black and blue lines, and was mostly white, but all places and all tracks were shown, on the whole, correctly.

We had climbed steadily from four hundred and fifty feet at the junction of the Ariège with the Garonne to nearly eighteen hundred feet at les Cabannes, but the rise had not been perceptible over those four days. But now, in the narrow, twisting, wooded valley of the torrential little Aston, we felt ourselves climbing rapidly.

Tombell led the way, and talked incessantly over his right shoulder, but he was full of mountain lore. He pointed out M. Rombergues' iron mine high up on the western side of the valley. He talked of bears, *sanglier* (wild boar), and *isards* (mountain goats), and showed us, in a little meadow of black soil, places where the sangliers had been rooting the grass up with their snouts "last night." He said that they were very shy, but came far down the valley on quiet nights.

In these tiny green fields were small, conical stacks of meadow hay, each with a pole through the middle. There were a few stone huts and houses, on ledges and terraced slopes, but the old terraces were overgrown with trees, some of the huts were deserted, and some in ruins. Tombell pointed out his father, pasturing cattle on a ledge, and said that cattle were regularly driven up the track as far as the place for which we were bound, to summer pasture.

Huts became rarer, and the woods thicker as we rose, and we were shown the handsome Barcelona nut tree, which resembles the beech, and were instructed in the uses of all the timbers, but I remember only that birchwood is used for brush handles and the handles of tools. The woods were mostly of pine, oak, birch, and Barcelona nut, and were very fine in the lower part of the valley.

The road had been wide enough for waggons, but had fallen into disuse, the great flat flags of stone lying all out of plumb. In a few places it climbed by shallow stone steps—a novel waggon road, but here Tombell exchanged mules for waggons. At one place was an iron cross, which he explained vaguely as something put there "in olden times." Then, at the narrow valley of a side stream, we came to what he called the Pont de Sclarens, but which the map calls the Pont de Selarens. It is incorrectly shown on the map, for there are two bridges, close together, the first, over the side stream, of logs and boards; the second, over the Aston, of iron and concrete. And the track continues thence on the east, not on the west of the Aston, as the map shows it.

There was a deep, clear trout pool under the second bridge, where we could see the shadowy fish, deep down. We wanted to swim here, but Tombell scouted the idea, for it was snow water, and I gathered that immersion would freeze us so brittle that pieces would break off if we slipped on the rocks. But I don't think that Tombell was accustomed to swim anywhere. We actually saw a fisherman downstream, and were told that the fishing in the streams and high tarns attracted a fair number of sportsmen in the good months.

We observed our regular system of halting, which surprised our guide, but he quite approved of it. At one halt I asked about the evident depopulation of the valley, the disused road, the ruined and abandoned cabins, and the overgrown terraces. It started a real dissertation. "In olden times," about a hundred years ago, this was a populous valley, inhabited by farmers, charcoal burners, and smiths, but they had all gone, except a few lingering farmers. The woods were full of the traces of charcoal burners, and there used to be many forges in these valleys, where they smelted iron—we would see one this evening. But changing times and methods, finally the War, had made mountain life unprofitable—people withdrew, things fell to ruin, and now, the young men were going to the cities, ex-soldiers were becoming gendarmes—bad, bad; France was in subtle danger from it. Why, people had no children these days, while in Germany—he had been there—you could see four or five gosses—youths about the door of every house. That was right; but France, what would become of France, with the country getting emptier? So thought Tombell, and I thought of Lot.

But Tombell became more animated. The hopes of this valley were vested in a big hydro-electric power scheme—he would show us the site of the projected dam—and that would mean a road, aerial cables, ways of getting things out of the valley. What things? Why, this wonderful timber. Look at the wealth it represented! Owned by a few men only, but still, a potential asset of enormous value; prosperity for the valley.

Beyond the bridge we were climbing in earnest, and there was no road, only an anastomosed track, with stone steps at the nodes—a cattle or mule track. At our second halt, near twin trees with horizontally disposed twigs at the ends of the branches, that gave them a layered appearance, the valley was wider, and only the birches were in leaf. Sea green birches, dull brown pines, and naked trees. It was here that we agreed: "We could easily have found this way ourselves—*we* don't want a guide."

We came shortly afterwards to an Open Place, a soggy flat, locked by the woods and hills, and to the west and south-east were the snowy crests. To the north we could see the summits beyond the Ariège. Here we were to halt for the night, and there, on a green knoll facing the west, was the hut. It was half-past four.

In the middle of the flat was a small enclosure around two trees, a pen to shade very young calves on hot Summer days. To the right was the forge, nothing but a series of grassy ridges and trenches and the remains of an old conduit. But Tombell said that lumps of pig iron were still found in the ground. And in the ground too were fresh traces of sanglier.

How tiny that hut looked at first! A grey stone rectangular hut, with a low gable of heavy pine logs covered with sods of turf. An opening between the top of the west wall and the peak of the roof was the chimney. The door was at the northern end of the same wall, and against the wall, inside, was the fireplace. Most of the room was take up by a raised sleeping platform of thick, dry bracken, behind a log bench that ran from side to side. There were little niches in the walls, and nails in every beam.

We dumped our packs and bundles, and Tombell at once removed most of his layered clothing. He was sweating heavily, but we noticed, not without self-congratulation, that we were fresh. When he was lightly clad again, he said that the first thing was wood, plenty of wood, for the fire must burn all night. So we dispersed to gather wood, and you disappeared.

I went over an old wooden bridge on the main stream, for the Aston forked at the hut. I laboured over heavy wood, and dragged it to the hut. I then went to a better place whence I could throw dry, dead wood, down towards the hut. After an hour, Tombell thought we had enough, and we started to get it inside. But where, I wondered, were you? I cooeed, and got no answer. But, the wood. We had to break much of it by passing an end through the door and then pressing on the end that projected obliquely outside—broke it by leverage. One tough, obstinate lump we could not break. "We'll let the fire cut him," said Tombell. And then we lit the fire.

That done, I left Tombell drying his damp underclothing before the fire, and spread myself on a grassy knoll by the forge, a little anxious about a venturesome young person who had gone off alone into the mountains to look for a bear. But soon you came back, like an antelope, oh slender one, and radiantly happy. The yellow wine of that lovely afternoon light was in your veins, and you had found a patch of snow! You were at peace with the world. Everything was at peace, and we did, as you said, feel the wonder of being two free creatures, in that beautiful place that hung under the snows, under the lavender peaks, an open seclusion in the brown and golden woods, that were mistily metallic in the bright evening. We *were* alone, away from everybody, with no living soul for miles around; ourselves to each other, satisfied, and relaxed. Alone, yes. For who was Tombell? Only the guide, over there in the hut. At that moment, he who had been an interesting person and was now only the guide, emerged from the hut, sniffed the weather, and went in again.

I was enjoying a delightful sense of ease, for I had been under a strain of translation all the time. Tombell *would* talk and be interesting, and naturally, you wanted to know what it was about, and to question. It was like a game of pitch and toss, and be sure of catching. My brain was tired, but perfectly assuaged. It took count of our condition. It was magnificent. Our eyes were like onyx, the whites very white indeed. We were tanned and clear of skin, and were open to the faintest of impressions; we were tireless; we were in mental and physical harmony, ready, ready as *we* could possibly be, for the trial of to-morrow. That was not to say that we were fit for it. It might demand a greater strength than our best. But we were at our best. And, surely, it had been so easy—it could not be as they said.

You had found snow. I took you to see what I had found—little yellow pansies growing among nettles on the bank below the hut. And in the hut Tombell lay snoring. We walked quietly around the Open Place, and you suffered contrition about the wood: but how I wish I could lose myself in pleasure as you can! That is part of being young.

At last our guide came out of the hut, stretching and yawning. We went and prepared supper, grilling ham and making toast, which interested Tombell greatly. He had brought his own supplies, bread, two litres of wine in the round leather flagon, and saucisson de la maison. He squirted a thin stream of wine into his mouth from the flagon without touching the nozzle, and without wasting a drop. He insisted that we try this wine, but we dared not try his way of drinking it, and I disliked putting the nozzle to my lips. But he would take no refusal. He explained how saucisson is made; the chopped meat and spices forced by hand into the skins, which are then laid down in a box in fine ashes, where they will dry, and keep for years. We emptied one canette and husbanded the other for the morrow. And Tombell yarned incessantly, after lecturing us on the unavoidable calamity of having to face the snow-drifts without bandes molletières. It was "très embêtant," he said—"an awful nuisance."

First, in the series of tales, came the hunter. An account of how he once stalked and shot a bear on the hill just behind the hut. Observations on the shyness of sanglier, which we might see on the Open Place to-night if there were no noise and the wind blew towards the hut. Then he would shoot one, and drag it to Aston on his shoulders, after he had taken us to the pass. It was profitable—he sold the meat at five francs a kilo in Foix. But one had to be discreet on account of the game laws, and it was closed season. Then of the isards, the mountain goats of high places. We might see some to-morrow, if the weather were good. In bad weather they and the bears kept to the remote caves between the rocks. He hoped that the weather would hold; that it would not snow during the day; that the sun would not shine hot enough to make the snow soft—that would cause difficulties. But a frosty night would help us. Evidently, the conditions of weather for an easy crossing were a delicate combination.

Then came the guide. He told of the traffic up the valley in July and August. How people camped among the high tarns to fish, their supplies coming up from Aston on mule back. He thought that about thirty people came up to cross the pass every Summer—no more. And all in July and August. We were very early—April—and *if* we crossed, would be the first of the year to do so, nor would others follow us for many weeks yet. The Summer before there had been two young Englishwomen, walking, like us, and they had big revolvers—would have used them, too, under provocation. He had guided them.

Then came—the smuggler. The main traffic of the pass was, he said, contraband. The smugglers went in parties of three or four, carrying packs weighing thirty kilos (we felt suddenly tired), containing, chiefly, phosphorous, gun powder, and tobacco. It was a hazardous business, as the gendarmes were vigilant, and it was not very profitable since the exchange had gone down. He knew many smugglers, fine fellows—no, he preferred hunting himself—and every now and then one was captured. If the police were about, they had to abandon the trails and go across the rocks. It was done in the Winter too, on clear, frosty nights, when the snow was crusted hard and they could walk across the frozen lakes up there.

Very late in the evening, when he felt sure of us, he admitted that he sometimes did a little smuggling himself, and he told us something of his impressions of the " other side." He had little respect for the ways of Spain, and thought their manner of roasting a pig there, by roasting it whole, in a big straw fire, was dirty. And the wine—too strong, no delicacy, and one could only drink a little of it.

He got up, went outside to look at the weather. I went to the stream and filled a canette with water, and imagined that I saw the shadowy forms of sanglier in the Open Place, even imagined that I could hear them, but Tombell said that sanglier and I could not be present on the Open Place together. Then we made ready for bed. We did not take Tombell to our bosoms that cold night. He seemed insulated and comfortable on his own side of the hut. We buttoned our two coats together, huddled side by side, and spread them over us, our feet to the fire, where they roasted. There was a dim light of the moon. A mixed odour of dry bracken, acrid wood smoke, aromatic pine smoke, food, Tombell, and the earthy smell from the soggy meadow. I kept waking up, to find you or Tombell adding a log to the low fire. I think you slept very little, and I was cold in spite of the fire. Thus we rested through that mysterious night, far from the world as two people would wish to be.

At half-past five in the morning Tombell aroused us. It was very cold, and we washed hurriedly in the stream. The weather was misty and uncertain, and our guide looked anxiously at the sky, not trusting the constancy of the imperceptible wind. He hurried us off. We were to casser la croûte—have a snack, at the second hut, and must waste no time.

At first we climbed rapidly, high above the river, then we seemed to go down, and reached the last of the Summer pasture. The trees became scantier. The faint track disappeared, and we followed Tombell, who knew exactly where to go.

Rock, huge, expansive, wavy, glaciated surfaces of dark rock, appeared before us, and we followed over them, climbing high *verrous*, steps in the valley floor, deeply notched by the stream since the age when a glacier occupied the valley of the Aston. Here and there were patches of snow, but there were no more trees. We were in an uttermost wilderness. The sides of the valley were very steep, the tiny, feeder-streams running down them in grooves in the rock, and there were many slopes of talus, streams of angular rock fragments down the valley sides, heaps of angular blocks below them in the valley bottom. Gradually, the ground we were following beside the stream became sloppy, and large patches of damp snow lay around, becoming larger and larger as we went on, until they formed a continuous, thin mantle of snow. And at seven o'clock we arrived at the second hut.

It was snowing lightly as we went into the hut to eat a light breakfast of bread and saucisson, drinking good cold water from a little side stream near by, to save our small supply of wine. Tombell scorned water, and squirted wine from the flagon, and then offered it to us. But it seemed unfair to accept it—he had to return. And he did not press us when we declined. There was no timber in the construction of the second hut, even the roof being of stone. Nor was there any wood to burn. The only fuel at that place was small bushes, to be gathered laboriously. I asked Tombell who was responsible for these huts, and he said that the commune of Aston maintained them for the use of people going into the mountains. There was, he said, only one unwritten rule—LEAVE ENOUGH WOOD FOR THE NEXT MAN. So that was why he was so anxious to have us gather wood, there below. He himself would probably be the "next man." I think we'd have done the same, eh? But the question started him talking. He told us tales of smugglers lost, trying to walk across the frozen lakes in the Winter. He told us of three German prisoners who made three attempts to escape into Spain this way, and at last succeeded. Then, noticing that it was snowing hard, and that the wind was rising, he told us abruptly to "Hurry up!" and set off at once, leaving us to follow.

He was very anxious indeed about the weather, and insisted that we must get to the pass by noon, so that he could return to Aston in daylight. We climbed up and up the glaciated valley, and I felt extraordinarily thirsty. Slyly I ate a handful of snow now and then, careful that Tombell should not see me, for his mountain lore would almost certainly include the legend that snow water poisons people. It may, but not at once. All signs of the track were obliterated over long distances. In places we picked our way across spreading rivulets; elsewhere we were high on the rocks above the river. At one such high place, where the valley suddenly became narrow and there was actually a flagged path and an iron handrail, Tombell said that we were on the site of the projected dam. He was continually scanning the higher rocks for isards, but said again and again in a disappointed way: "Ils sont dans les cavernes, les isards —they're keeping to the caves." It sounded really like a comment on the weather, not on the game; as though the sight of an isard would reassure him. And he spoke repeatedly of the danger of the snow softening up there, should the day clear and the sun shine—for a frosted condition was best, he reiterated.

There was no sign of any life. Even the stunted rhododendron bushes and tufts of grass were hidden under deepening snow. And at last, where the valley opened out and forked, we came to the third hut, at a quarter to nine. It was a ruin, low down by the river, but Tombell said that there was a good hut, snowed under, half a kilometre up the hillside. The weather here was clearer and much colder, striking through our coats.

We looked up the valley at a landscape of Antarctic desolation, white snow, and black, crystalline rock, and a heavy, grey sky. Tombell looked at the forked stream and asked:

"Which is the Aston?" We didn't know, and pointed to the wrong one. He looked triumphant, asking:

"You'd have gone the wrong way alone, wouldn't you?" And it was there that we looked at each other and agreed:

"How lucky we are to have a guide! We'd *never* have found the way alone."

We turned sharply to the left from here, leaving the river, to climb a spur. Thus far, the work had been comparatively easy, but the spur! We sank into deep snow between the bushes. Every step was heavy labour, every article we carried seemed to increase more and more in weight, and I could not get enough air into my lungs. I had to stop frequently, and breathe deeply. It was, I think, the first effects of rarified air. Even going up in a lift, or going down a mine, I have to adjust the pressure in my ears consciously, and may be rather sensitive in that way. But here, I wanted, more than ever I had wanted, to keep up with people, but the beaten feeling grew in me, and at last I stopped.

"Listen," I said, when I found breath enough to say it, "I'm going to drink some wine."

"Ah! c'est bon!" said Tombell, with an offensive supply of energy. "Vous n'avez bu que de l'eau, et ça affaiblit.—Good idea. You've only drunk water, and that's weakening." Even there, I could not help but appreciate so ingenuous a remark, and remembered his statement of the night before, that two litres of wine a day is a minimum allowance for any man. But we both drank a little wine, and it renewed my strength, and we got to the top of that spur in less than an eternity.

At the top, Tombell pointed southward, upward, across the stream. There rose, from the top of a great, bare slope of snow, a sheer rock, a wall, hundreds of feet of vertical cliff.

"That's the real pass," he said. "We go up there, and around the base by a narrow platform. Had you been alone would you have suspected it was there?" Nobody but an insane person would have suspected that it *could* be there, but he assured us that it was the only way into Spain from the Aston. I looked at that bare, even expanse of sloping snow, perhaps a thousand feet, and felt fear—not fear of the natural danger, but fear of being conquered by it. Could I, how could I, climb *that*, after the spur below? But Tombell decided the matter by going on again. I would climb it by trying to climb it.

We descended to the river, finding drifts of snow fifteen feet deep along the banks. We slid down, maintained a miraculous footing from one great boulder to another, and faced the wall of snow on the other side.

I had climbed the wall, and was making slow progress some distance up the smooth snow slope. Tombell was far ahead, I looked around, and you were far behind, still at the river. You jumped—and fell through the snow, into the water. I stopped dead. You reappeared, signalled, climbing up the bank, and I turned again to the steep, white inclined plane. The snow seemed to lie at the sliding angle, and the only foothold was the depth to which my legs sank. How I wanted Tombell to be nearer, to hold out a hand! How I wanted you to be nearer, that I might hold out a hand! But even Tombell was taxed to his utmost, ploughing laboriously up there, and there was help for nobody. I looked neither up nor down any more. I only looked into Tombell's footholes and followed beside them. Oh, the maddening sameness of those black holes! On the spur, it had been the footprints of the man in front, the silly pattern of the nails—why always the same, exactly the same, same, same, except for short stretches where his soles were heavy with clinging, balled snow?

Three things were running through my mind. Bandes molletières—I wanted bandes molletières! The snow was caked to my flapping trousers, pulling them, pulling, tugging my belt. It weighted the skirts of my coat, weighted my boots. And I was wet through, arms, legs, seat, through falling and subsiding into the snow. Bandes molletières! If only I had them it would be all right. I would get up *there*.

Then, Antarctic, the Antarctic! How did they do it? Was it much worse than this, or just this, and always this? The Professor climbed Erebus. How high, how long? Like this?

Then, where's Max? I don't care. Behind. He'll get up or he won't get up. And if he doesn't, I'll go back, and we'll find him—somewhere.

Ultimately, my mind ceased to work at all, became stupid, viscous. I became quite automatic, following the holes of Tombell, following beside them, pausing when I wanted to pause, going on as I had strength to go on, but automatically. I dug my fingers into the snow, forced my arms into it for support; trod lightly, or tried to do so, where the surface was crusted, only to crash through and hurt my shins on the crust. But it didn't matter. There was no danger. The whole slope might suddenly dislodge and go plunging into the river, but it wouldn't matter. I was there, and something would happen, or it would not happen, and either way it would be the same. I was numb, dull, my eyes swimming a little. The holes, keep to the holes.

I saw, just above me, some tiny, protruding bushes! I staggered and fell towards them, lay down on the snow, clinging to them. And presently I looked up. I was right under the huge wall of rock! At the top—nearly! Tombell was—somewhere. I couldn't see him. I didn't care.

Down—a sheer plane! Far, far below, the black thread of the stream. You! Fastened to a string of black holes that ran from me downward, and not so far behind. I waited until you came. But only our eyes could speak.

Twenty feet more, then, the little, narrow platform, just a foot wide. To the right, rock, vertical to the sky, hundreds of feet. To the left, snow slope and cliff, interminable, downward, steep, steep. A thousand feet. In my senses I could never have walked around that narrow platform. I would have become dizzy and fallen. But I had no senses. We walked around it together, as if we were walking along a street, carelessly, stepping over the edge into crusted snow.

It led us to a flat place, and to Tombell, and around the corner we were met by a high wind. We all set off together, easily now, sinking deeply into the snow the hardest thing; but the sudden reduction of effort released the pain, the hurt of moving. There was a look on faces—Tombell, dogged, nearly silent, a single word now and then; you, blanched, exhausted, unbeaten; me?

In the space of a few minutes the air filled with rushing snow, became a heavy, white thing. It was impossible to tell where the earth ended and the air began, a hundred yards ahead, but there were great, black rocks here and there. By one of them you tried to take a photo! Tombell seemed to know where he was going, and steered from rock to rock. But the next rock was only seen at intervals. Was it the same rock? At one spot, he pointed downward, and said that that was the lake, down there—the lake, where, in our plan, you said that you would "take a bath!" But was there a lake? Downward was only space, muffled and swathed in whirling snow.

The air was too thick with snow to see anything now. There was not a guiding mark of any kind, and Tombell was steering by instinct. He said that we were on the narrow causeway between the two lakes, the little, high lake, and the big, low one, the Etangs de Fontargente. Were we? Then there must be cliffs, or a precipice on the left, very close. A clear moment showed us, on the right, a horizontal sheet, a lawn of snow, and a black background of rocks. It was the little, high lake.

Thence we seemed to go down. We slid down banks of snow, waist deep in places, the slope unperceived until we were sliding, the distance unknown until we stopped. The land got gentler, but the whiteness was affecting our eyes with dazzle and blindness, and I had to close and open mine regularly. The wind was a cruelty with claws. Tombell, poor fellow, was suddenly affected with a bowel seizure, and told us to go on, make for a col that could be dimly seen at intervals, and he would catch us up.

But the col and the air were the same dim white, and soon we lost all sense of direction. We sat on a rock, and noticed that around each rock was an empty trench two feet deep, between it and the level of the snow. Presently, out of the dim whiteness, came Tombell. We went down, to the bottom of a hollow. The air cleared a little, the wind sharpened, and we could see the col plainly.

Tombell became dramatic. He assumed an attitude, raised a hand aloft, majestically indicating the col, and then, as though he had made it himself, announced:

"Voilà la frontière!"

It was the Port de Fontargente.

Tombell put on leggings and we turned towards the col. It didn't look far up to the neck—a couple of hundred feet. But oh, the interminable agony of that last climb! The driving of the mind by something behind the mind, that legs might move yet one step more, one, and one, and one, each a separate, infinitely heavy operation of the whole being, as though a great machine had to be set again and again, for just one turn that executed a single, powerful movement. Thin, mountain air; and Tombell seemed to find one place no more difficult than another in these lost, high places. It took three hundred years to climb that last, steep slope. But at last, the top. Nearly seven thousand feet above the sea. Five thousand feet above les Cabannes—only twenty-three kilometres, less than fifteen miles, from les Cabannes, and still two thousand feet below the nearest peaks. But the crest of the Pyrenees, the edge of France, the edge of Spain!

The wind, the wind, rushing, flaying us. Why wouldn't Tombell stop talking and let us go, out of the wind, or let us move, in the wind? He said that he would be in Aston by nightfall. That for us it would now be easy, straight down, and soon the pines, then a chapel, houses, men. He congratulated us on the performance—said that he had not believed that we would ever do it; had thought that we would be disheartened, would abandon it; yet we had done it, and it was not yet noon.

I asked him for his proper name, and slowly he wrote on my leather wallet, Auguste Authier—he must *write* it, he said, or we would forget it. Oh chattering teeth, oh numbness and sharp pain of the cold. Oh Tombell, please stop talking and go soon. I paid him—could I only have paid him double! And the good fellow had almost forgotten about the money. Misery of the wind. We shook hands with him, turned the opposite way, and without once looking back, we pressed into a wind of cold steel.

ANDORRA

"... so walled
By mountain ranges half in summer snow,
No one would covet it or think it worth
The pains of conquering to force change on."
Robert Frost

XXI

HIGH VESTIBULE OF SPAIN

We were there! We had succeeded! For Andorra was practically Spain. But this was no time for exultation, and no such thought was in either mind.

We might yet fail.

The snows of Andorra were deeper than the snows of France, and we were sinking into them up to our thighs. We must keep on labouring through the snow, through the icy wind, going down, down, a long way down, and it was harder going down than in many parts of that gigantic struggle of going up.

The snows were so deep. Long steps . . . long steps. But the descent was quick, and the wind became less cruel, though it remained keen and strong. The air was clearing, and we could see pines, down in front of us, a long way off. Soon we heard the sound of running water—under the snow. Even the stream was covered deep in snow. It would emerge to run for a little way between banks of snow, fifteen, twenty feet high, and would then disappear again. But where to walk over these deep drifts? Along the stream? Along the slope of the valley side?

Further down the snow was crusted in places. Time after time we plunged through it, hurting our shins as we fell or withdrew our legs through the crust, falling, stumbling at nearly every step. We heard the grunt of an animal, unmistakably the grunt of an animal, over by the stream. A sanglier? We could see nothing.

The snow mantle was getting thinner, beginning to reveal the softened forms of things, of underlying rocks, of masses of tufted grass, and progress became dangerous. We could hear the sound of running water right beneath us now, under our feet, a side stream.

We were abreast of the first, stunted, scrub pines of the valley side. The tearing wind was at last far above us. The lower air was only rushing coldly now. But walking had become a torture. We crashed through crusted snow, to find a leg caught between rocks, and we went on, perilously, fearing every step. A broken leg here would mean heroism for one of us, were we then to emerge safely, and heroism is the most wasteful of human acts. Where to walk? In the bottom, over the hidden rocks, or up the valley side a little? We went up the valley side.

It was hard, hard. The great tufts of grass gave under us, and softly let us down into feet of snow. Left legs did more work than right legs, and wearied hopelessly. Right legs cramped. Bodies numbed, in the slower, uneven, safer movement. We felt our exhaustion, admitted it in our looks—a bad sign, the beginning of a retreat of courage. I thought of something. We would rest at the first pines that offered even a meagre shelter from the falling snow; at the first place that would give the slightest protection from the wind.

We found a place in a clump of pines and sat on prickly bushes that were hidden under the snow. It was rest, repose. We smiled at one another, two exhausted people who had done that which could not be done. Our packs were soaked through. We were wet through, shivering. No resting here for too long! I withdrew Pauline's flask of Monnet brandy from my pack. We drank the whole contents, exactly half each, and said "Blessèd be Pauline!" Then we munched our remaining chocolate and watched each other regaining warmth and colour.

I thought a little of Tombell. The brandy would have been good for Tombell, but I could not afford to offer it to him. Back there behind the pass there were a look on your face and a feeling inside myself that warned me to keep the brandy.

We moved from our shelter under the pines, revived. We must keep moving, not rest now until we could rest in a warm place. Downward, struggling, labouring along the uneven valley side, but the mantled snow getting ever thinner, and the wind less keen, less strong; wetter and more like rain the falling snow.

Before us there opened a magnificent valley to the south-west, the valley of the Valira del Orién, the continuation of the valley we were in, but looking like a different thing, so far below, a thing of magnitude. And, joining it on the left, a chasm, a profound trench sawn into the rock, the lesser valley that comes down by Soldéu, from up near the lower pass above l'Hospitalet, the way by which sensible people enter Andorra.

We began to discern things in this world of dazzling white and dull grey: the floor of the deep valley below—a pattern of stone walls. Two of the walls ran parallel, and winding between them was the stream. Two others, under the near valley side, also ran parallel, a jointed, double line, a road. There below, on the left, was the chapel, solitary, apart. There below, on the right, were stone houses, one to every eight or ten of the roughly quadrangular patches enclosed by the stone walls.

And we saw men, two men, saw them clearly, standing on the road in front of a stone house! We know, from that, the unforgettable feeling of lost people who at last see men. There were men in the world. We were to be received again into the life of men, and soon, very soon. We laughed, chattered, in a foolish tone of light hysteria, and we hurried. No use hurrying!

But at last the rocks were bare, and suddenly our little valley plunged down to the great one. We sought the spur on the right and found a grey stone wall running down a steep waste of grey stone. We followed the wall downward, stepping painfully over the big stones, and soon we were at the road, at the bottom.

A flat, wide, muddy lane between walls. We turned to the right, away from the chapel, and went towards the house where the men were. It was a long way off. A neat, substantial hut of stone with a low-pitched gable of slate and no chimney. All the houses we could see were like that.

At the door was a strapping, healthy boy of about twenty, with pink cheeks. I asked him in French if we might take shelter in the hut, and he replied, in French, with an invitation to come in and sit by the fire. We were invited into a house! When had we been invited into a house before?

We sat on a wooden bench by a table, in front of a low, hoodless hearth where there was a fire of roots, chips, and twigs. The dog resented our presence, but the boy told him we were people who had asked for shelter, so the dog withdrew, to watch us mistrustfully—bad people ask for shelter sometimes. The boy put more wood on the fire, and we told him that we had just come over the pass and were going into Spain, and were wet through and very tired. He was not curious about us, and merely told us that we might stay there until we were ready to go. We spread our things to dry, and the dog eyed us closely—strange people may have weapons. We asked the boy if we might eat our lunch at the table, and he said that he would eat his with us. We exchanged food—cheese, and bread, and the boy offered us yellow, Spanish wine from a large, dirty vessel. It tasted of dissolved insects and was very strong. The dog came to us, and accepted saucisson. The dog apologised.

The boy went away to tend animals, and we looked around. The place was a bare camp. There were wooden farm implements on the far side of the room, and the inner room, that made the plan of the house an L or a T, seemed to be empty. The chimney was an aperture between the top of the wall and the peak of the roof above the fire. The fire was on a square platform a foot high, and the "chimney" drew well, like the hole at the top of the wall in Tombell's hut. Where was Tombell now?

The boy came back and we talked before the fire. He wanted to know very little about us. He had been to school. There were French schools, he said, in Andorra. He told us a lot about his little country, but it was all wrong, as we found afterwards. The ideas were right, but the facts were wrong, but it was interesting, and it didn't matter. He said that we were fortunate not to have come through Soldéu, for the people there were bad, not truly of Andorra but isolated in a high place, different.

He said that he came from Canillo, the first village down the valley. That people in Canillo had farms and houses far up the valley, where somebody had to stay all the Winter, as he was staying, to look after the horses. It was his brother we had seen talking to him, but his brother had gone back to Canillo. There was little fodder left in there, in the barn, as it was nearly the end of Winter. He was making a pair of sabots out of billets of yellow wood—there was plenty of time in the Winter. He had made the ones he was wearing, but they were not good; these would be better. He showed us the curious, pointed, doubly bent chisel, shaped like a spoon, that is used for hollowing and smoothing the sabots inside.

How foreign it all was! Satisfyingly foreign and new. How different from France—but France was far away on the other side of the mountains. And it would all be different now, new, unlike France.

Never, since my first day in Egypt had I felt this thrill of a foreign place: not in Habana, nor Panamá, nor Durban, las Palmas, Marseille, Vancouver, Antwerp—all the others had been like something I had experienced before, but this was new. Spain—it was to be new.

We were warm and rested. I asked the boy if we might pay for the shelter, wine, and food we had received. He said that it didn't matter at all. I gave him ten francs, and he said thank you, quite simply, but repeated that it really didn't matter at all, though he accepted the money readily enough. We said good-bye to him and went down the sloppy road in a light drizzle of rain. But we will remember him, the first man, and a kindly one.

We trudged along the road and came to the boy's village of Canillo, a group of neat stone houses of the kind we had already seen, each with one or two small, square windows in the end walls. The houses were all numbered, and on many was the date of their completion. Women in this village greeted us as if to greet strangers were the right thing to do. Evidently we were not outcasts here.

There was a plain chapel with a verandah at Canillo. What kind of churches do they have in Andorra? We went over to look at it, but found the door locked. Then it began to snow again, lightly, in big, feathery flakes, and we sat on the chapel steps to wait until it was over.

Down by the river there was a flume and a miniature power station for electric light. It seemed unnaturally modern, but that was not all. There were even telephone poles, though they carried only a few wires, and one line of a single wire went right on up the valley, to Soldéu, we supposed. And on the other side of the stream the track was paved, and retained by a stone wall on the steeper slopes.

There were many houses below Canillo, and many little fields, all terraced, the stonework sound and exquisitely neat. Gradually the road climbed over a shoulder, the valley became narrow, and the river, instead of being a swift, shallow stream, became a roaring torrent in a narrow gorge far below us.

The road went down again, winding steeply, a plunging, mountain road, and towards us came a picturesque mule team that reminded me of scenes in the Andes, pictures in books. The men carried umbrellas and were all wrapped in heavy blankets of bright, thick colour and coarse check pattern, grey, blue, yellowish red, brown, and white. They were dark foreign-looking men, ideal mountaineers, and they gave us a greeting that you said was *buenas tardes*—good afternoon. The mules were carrying covered bundles fastened simply to the surcingles.

Snow had ceased to fall and the ground at last was clear. In the neat little fields were young crops of grain, delightfully soft and fresh after the desolation we had traversed, and the valley before us was magnificent. The hillsides were made of schists and flaggy slates, the layers sloping to the north-west. The lower slopes were covered with bushes. High above the road were pine forests that rose to the snowline, and above them towered the serene, white crests. We could see far down the lower valley into a misty loveliness that made you call this vale of Andorra a "little Switzerland." The extent and neatness of the terracing astonished us, for every slope that was not too steep had been converted into a prim yet informal stairway of tiny green ledges. And where there were no terraces there were pines.

Rowdy little streams came tumbling down precipices or down grooves in the sloping rock on the far side of the gorge. On our side the slope of the layers of the schist had permitted the construction of the track. But the mountains had accorded its existence only a niggardly permission, for there were many places where the track had been covered by landslides, and had had to be built again, around or over the avalanches of fallen rock. So many were the landslides, and so new did some of them look, that this mountain road seemed to us a courageous thing that lives always in peril.

In many places beside the road were piles of logs, and above them on the mountain side, were the bare corridors between the trees and bushes, where they had torn their sliding way down from the heights. At one place we passed a ruined tower on a spur. At another was a large round construction of stone that seemed to be a kiln. And we came to a point of vantage whence we looked down upon Encamp, in a wide valley below.

The "village" was a cluster of three separate hamlets, huddled groups of houses close together by the stream, the low-pitched roofs all sloping at exactly the same angle, the houses disposed in a way that made all similar lines parallel, yet with such differences of height and distance as to give a precise neatness and order, without regularity. From the largest group rose the tall, square, brown tower of the church, and from the cluster emerged a real macadam road, curving gracefully down the valley.

On all side of Encamp the mountains rose, but they were not the mountains of France, of Foix. For here there was a sternness of outline, a ruggedness, a definition of edges, that made them altogether different from the Pyrenees of France, the mountains of grand, simple curves. They remained strong, without harshness; bold, without sharp aggression; but here, on the Spanish side, they were still "in the rough." They have been rounded and civilised, in France.

Our road, below here, improved to the status of a good waggon road, though far too steep and winding for wheeled traffic, and it led us rapidly downward into gentler, opener country. At a bend in the road, among low green hills and steep pastures where there were a few hedges, we rested by a small shrine. This building was a gabled shelter-porch over the image of the Virgin, which was locked in a kind of cage, a niche with a grating before it. The porch was open in front and there were benches along the walls inside for those who wished to sit and contemplate the inner mystery.

We went on, and wound between open hills that nestled under the mountains, and we came suddenly to the first group of houses of Encamp. We crossed the river on a wide bridge of hewn wood, and asked an old man to direct us to an hotel kept by a French schoolmaster. The boy at Canillo and Tombell, had both spoken of this hotel as a place where we would encounter no difficulty of language. But the old man was rather scornful of it, and said, in excellent French, "Oh, if you want to go to *that* one, go down the main road until you come to the macadam road, et voilà l'hôtel." We thanked him and crossed the river again, noticing that a few people were politely staring from the houses, as if the familiar view of their own mountains had just caught their attention for the first time.

The next hamlet of the Encamp group was a place of tall, painted houses with long windows protected by iron railings but without balconies. They were lightly gay, those houses, blue, grey and yellow. In a little square we saw the pink Hotel Oros, which looked like a good hotel. "Now," we argued, "if the French schoolmaster can't take us, we'll probably have to come back here, where they'll have seen us pass. Why not go here straight away?" It was only a quarter past four in the afternoon, but we needed rest, long rest.

The patron greeted us in French, and spoke to the staff in Catalán. We were taken up to a large front room with two big iron bedsteads, and at once we took off our wet clothes. Nearly everything in the packs was wet, but the hotel kindly placed itself at our disposal. We washed in good hot water, rubbed ourselves down with dry towels, put on clean socks, underwear and shirts, and dressed ourselves in loose coats and trousers lent to us by the patron. Canvas slippers were given us, and our boots, clothes, and all other wet things were taken to the kitchen to be dried.

During these operatious we asked the patron what the hotel rates were, but he pretended that he wasn't the patron and said that he would find out and let us know. It was hours before we noticed that he hadn't found out, but we were too fatigued to worry about it, and it seemed not to matter—we were in a warm, dry place of rest. Utterly fatigued, we lay down on our beds, too tired to sleep or talk.

My mind was very active as I lay there, and I thought of Tombell. Had we really endangered him? No, for he knew exactly what he was doing, though it was much, much harder than even experienced Tombell had expected it to be. But he was sick. It might be snowing so heavily up there that he would be forced to take miserable shelter in the third or second hut. Should I have offered him the brandy? No, I thought not, for he had wine. But I was anxious about Tombell.

I think we were both relieved when M. Rombergue's pleasant reply reached us in Paris two months later. He said that it had taken Tombell seven hours to return to Aston, in whirlwinds of snow that "filled his throat," and, from M. Rombergue's account, it seems that our crossing of the pass will become one of the stories that Tombell will relate before the fire on Winter nights for the rest of his life.

Was it the hardest effort I had ever made? The hardest *physical* effort, yes. My mind, however, had been able to drown itself in unconscious, automatic function. But, the hardest effort? No. More than once, I had been driven to incredible exertion, effort of the mind and body together, the mind alert, thinking, directing, urging, compelling, with a fierce rapidity, under a necessity that knew no mercy, allowed no room for error, false judgment; demanded that I carry a whole weight of movement to success. I had found then, a resource in myself that I did not know existed —and I drained it. It is there no longer. But at that time I was younger. Could I do the same now? I could not.

"Adventures—what were adventures?" I asked myself, as I lay on the bed wondering about the last two days. We had expected adventures on this journey, but they never came. There came always, discovery, new beauty, new feelings, discovery of a greater range in old feelings, but no adventures. Still, the War itself was not an adventure—not of the kind that makes life an exciting, fascinating drama to pursue to ever more wonderful and unexpected developments. The things that I expected *might* happen on this journey—none of them were happening. The pass, for example. I had thought much about the passage over the mountains, and had expected a steep, narrow mule-track, like the one that led down to Encamp itself, winding high above the torrents, along precipices; perhaps an avalanche from a high snowfield, and a long détour around it; perhaps a landslide. I had expected the Alps, but the Pyrenees are different. And certainly I had expected people, glowering men driving mules; robbers, brigands, perhaps an encounter, an escape. A winding way through dark chasms into Spain; perils of a steep, frozen track; bears. Yet, there were few of these things. There had been, instead, the hardest work we had ever done, and a few kindly people. A disappointment? Not in the least. A rare experiment; a splendid experience; a possession, now. Something different from all expectation.

And Andorra? I had known little about Andorra, and most of it was wrong. I had expected a wild, half-barbaric, hill-people, living in a primitive way, poor and ignorant: but they spoke polished French, lived in the neatest of stone houses, had electric light—here in our bedroom—had telephones, good tracks, and a beautiful, well-ordered country that they were using properly.

What was Andorra to us? A place of recuperation, it seemed. We had spent the reserve of our forces in the mountains and were resting in Andorra that we might enter Spain in vigorous condition. It felt like one of those passages of music that are a transition between unrelated keys—a few bars of Chopin, that transport the soul from one world into another and are so beautiful that they bring tears. It felt like that, in a muted way, but it represented no such pause or transition between different planes of existence. It was good, all the same, to be resting in Andorra that afternoon.

But there were also practical things to consider, one of them the matter of Spanish money. It seemed that French money was accepted in Andorra, but I had only a couple of hundred francs, and you had practically none. The nearest bank where I could draw on my letter of credit was at Zaragoza, nine or ten days away, therefore, unless we could change your dollars, we would be in difficulties—might have to take the train to Barcelona!

After an hour we found that to rest was to get cold. We left the room to look for a fire, and on the way downstairs we saw several athletic young men, wearing brown shirts, breeches, and leggings, at work over maps at a long table in a large room. Surveyors? We were invited to sit in the kitchen with an old woman, a younger one, and an old man. The fire in the kitchen range was replenished from a big tub of pine cones, of which it seemed to burn remarkably few. The young woman withdrew the ashpan from the stove and placed it under our feet. They all spoke Catalán, which we could not understand, but the old man gave us a lecture on pines and pine cones in Castilian of a sort, half of which was lost on us through our ignorance of the names of trees and timbers.

The patron came in, and talked to us in French about Andorra, and we learnt that the little state is very ancient. He said that the oldest document in the archives is a charter of Charlemagne's time, of about A.D. 800, but is not preserved in Andorra itself, because all the valuable and interesting documents relating to the republic had been "removed" elsewhere. He told us that Andorra has two princes, the bishop of Séo de Urgél, and the President of the French Republic, but that neither dignitary ever appears in the country because, if he come among them, he is required to take an oath of loyalty to the people. The state is divided, he said, into six parishes, and the people elect a representative assembly under a president; and he added that the president then in office was his brother-in-law. Taxes are paid in alternate years to France and Spain, which countries discharge certain obligations in return. There are, for instance, the French schools, and the two highest courts of law are maintained one at Madrid, the other at Perpignan. It seemed to us to be a curious condition of "independence," but he looked upon it as thoroughly satisfactory.

He said that the country was prosperous though not rich, "For what," he asked, "have we here? A little farming, a little tobacco, grown on the sunny slopes, a few animals, and timber, but that is not much." Then in the most frank way, he continued, "Of course, what we really depend on here is contraband. Everybody is engaged in one way or another in contraband traffic, though, with French money at its present low value, it is not what it used to be."

Evidently, nobody in Andorra made any secret of the honourable smuggling trade, and considered it nothing to cause shame. Perhaps it explained another statement, in which he said that, although Catalán was the language of the people, all the well-to-do men spent a year or two in France as a necessary part of their education, to learn French perfectly.

Dinner time drew near, and we thought we would like an apéritif. So we went into another room and drank coffee and anis, an aniseed liqueur. The anis was brought in conical glass bottles with glass stoppers, and the glassware was bright and clean as in a chemical laboratory.

While we were there the brown-clad boys come in. They were fine fellows, tanned, handsome, of splendid physique, and delightful in their manners. They came from Barcelona, and except for one who spoke a little, lame French, they could speak nothing but Catalán, so we understood one another poorly. They had no hesitation in showing us their maps, an old map of Andorra, published by Philip in London, and a very good, new map published by the Academy of Sciences of Barcelona. They told us that people from Barcelona come regularly to Andorra for holidays and for mountaineering; that the Pic de Casamanya is a famous climb with the reward of a magnificent view from the top, though it was still too early in the year for an ascent. We could not understand what they were doing, and it seemed indiscreet to ask. They may have been students on holiday, they may have been surveyors—though the new map left little to survey. They seemed to be professional men whose work was out of doors, and, as our first Spaniards, they made a most favourable impression on us. They might not, however, have consented to be called Spaniards, for they came from Barcelona! And the stress that they placed upon Barcelona stirred an alarming interest in you.

For dinner we were served a yellow, vermicelli soup, meat, an omelette, a salad of rosettes of a smooth-leaved weed from the mountain sides, and quince conserve. Yellow wine was brought in a strange, round, glass vessel with a long neck and a long, pointed spout like that of a watering can—a kind of glass vase with a side spout. It was supposed to be used like Tombell's leather flagon, but we asked for wine glasses.

Through the window of the dining room we could see a garden where the fruit trees had been nipped by the frost. Just behind them was the steep mountainside, but, by standing at the window, we could look down the misty vale of Andorra to the south-west. I put a hand instinctively into the side pocket of the patron's coat, and *found* cigarettes. I smoked them all.

We went early up to bed, and the room was so cold that we piled all the covers on to one bed and slept together. Sleep, sound, long and untroubled, came quickly. And how France was far away!—comme la France était loin! Remote as Paris, on that first night when we slept at Etréchy. Ready to be forgotten.

In the morning the maid came staggering into the room under the heavy bundle of our dried belongings. We went down to a French breakfast, and drank goats' milk in our coffee.

Then came the bill. It amounted to nineteen pesetas, which alarmed us, for it seemed very expensive, though we had no idea, yet, of the value of things in Andorra or Spain. The patron, who had not been able to say yesterday what the tariff would be, consented now to accept French money. He consulted a newspaper for the rate of exchange, and for a hundred francs gave us twenty-three pesetas. Quelle différence!

We left Encamp at nine o'clock that morning, fresh and energetic, as ready for the day's march as we had ever been—as if there had been no spending of our utmost strength the day before. We must have been in splendid training and equally good condition at that time.

The road down from Encamp was very steep, and the valley narrowed again. The third cluster of Encamp was on the north side of the river; and, from where we looked back, these three prim, brown villages that are one place, set at the foot of the mountains among green hills and neat flights of terraced fields, made an almost Norwegian picture of puny, fresh loveliness. Man, for ever bound, at the feet of Earth!

There was much pine forest, and every turn of the road showed us a new aspect of the snow-clad summits, everywhere harder in character than on the French side; peaks that might well dare the bold to climb them. At a marked bend of the road the map said that there was a lake, but we could see no lake, for it was perched high up on a broad, flat shoulder of the mountains. It reminded me of our lake at Bear Mountain, beside the Hudson but far above it, a lake on a ledge, unnaturally permanent and secure, in a hollow of the rock that had been gouged out by the action of the glaciers of a long past, colder age.

Where the stream entered the gorge by a narrow cleft from the south-east we came to Escaldas, a village where there are poplars. Narrow streets of tall houses, very like those of Encamp. A certain resemblance to a tourist resort. A resemblance explained by the fact that Escaldas has mineral baths. Little else could call a village into existence in so narrow a place. And the village greeted us with a new automobile that seemed too large and fat for the narrow, crooked streets. But Escaldas is as far as a car can go up the valley, the road thence to Encamp being too steep.

At a corner café we were served coffee in the brightest of clean glasses by an attractive brown girl, who sat and talked to us in French. The top of the big, round table was made out of a single slab of black walnut, and the girl wiped it carefully before she served us. We noticed, too, that the wooden floor of the café was scrubbed very clean. The girl was interested in strangers, and talked gaily, naturally, in a most winning way. She persuaded me to drink an anis, and, although I dislike aniseed in most forms, I found myself enjoying this syrupy Spanish liqueur. We asked for more coffee, and she insisted on replacing the bright glasses by others equally bright. In France they would have poured the second coffee into the same glasses, which would not have been over-bright.

We asked this girl about hotels along the road in Spain, and she brought the patron to advise us. The staging places we had marked, he said, were places where good accommodation would be found, and he assured us that we need fear no difficulty in Spain, which relieved us greatly. We asked him, too, where we could change money, and he wrote down the address of Señor Benventura Ribes in Séo de Urgél.

When we left the café the brown girl gave us each a bunch of white narcissi, the wild flower of the country, and we passed out of Escaldas with a feeling that people were, at last, open and friendly.

On the way out we noticed a very well constructed public laundry trough. Just below the village there were many goats browsing on the steep valley sides. The gorge widened out gradually, and the road went ever down and down, as though we would never cease descending. The wide valley, similar to the valley of Encamp, was very beautiful, and there were whole fields of narcissi on its floor.

Houses were numerous, the roofs of many held down by heavy stones placed near the edges, so that the walls took their weight. Some of the houses were built over the barns, others had separate barns, and in the end walls of every barn was a large, rectangular opening, wider than it was high, and barred by a grille of stout vertical poles, regularly spaced, that gave it the appearance of a cage. All the buildings were of the neatest of stonework. We had noticed things like these above Encamp yesterday, but in our exhaustion we had noticed them subconsciously. We remembered them now.

Soon came the first view of the capital of Andorra, Andorra la vieja, no more than a big brown village, with the parallel lines of low gables and tall houses, and the tall square tower of another Encamp. It was perched on a high, grassy bank of rubble (a glacial moraine) above the river on the far, the north-western side. We left the road and took a track to a wooden bridge, where there were notices that forbade the driving of cattle across, and under the bridge the river ran shallow and swift, full of bright pebbles and gay music.

The capital of this miniature country had no houses of parliament nor other impressive public buildings, so far as we could see. Its position is what makes it the capital, for it stands at the junction of the two deep mountain vales that form Andorra, at the confluence of the Valira del Orién and the Valira del Nort. Down this latter, western vale we would have come, to here, had we followed our original plan of going up the Vicdessos on the French side, the plan from which we were dissuaded by the gendarmes at Tarascon.

Andorra la vieja itself is a pleasant stone village of four and five storey houses, with a large public square in which we saw one automobile. We went to a tall café on a corner of the square and asked about lunch. An obliging girl there wrestled with Castilian phrases, and told us that we could not obtain lunch at the café, but she would have us conducted to a restaurant. Our guides were two very small girls, who led us around corners and through little streets where there were many children, to a corner house, where they stopped, pointed to the door, then to the first floor windows. We gave them pennies, which they accepted shyly. When had we received so pretty a courtesy before? Only from the boy at Montauban, and from Mme. Martin at Glénic, and then it was courtesy of quite a different kind.

In the restaurant they spoke nothing but Catalán, and we made ourselves understood with difficulty. We sat at a round table with other people, and waited a long time for a far more elaborate meal that we thought we had ordered, a meal very like the dinner at Encamp. The other people each drank no more than half a tumblerful of the yellow wine, but we wanted more than that to drink. How to get it? We didn't get it. We got, instead, a bill of ten pesetas, which seemed very expensive indeed, and I wondered if *all* our ready money would last us as far as Zaragoza, should these be the prevailing prices.

We left Andorra la vieja by a good automobile road that had stonework along the sides, a wall, gutters, culverts for storm water, and kilometre stones that gave the distance from the frontier of the state to the capital. The river Valira, bearing all the waters of Andorra, was beside us, white-foaming cataract and level pool, green-swirling through the boulder bed.

One valley now, the winding, outward way, strong trunk or stem of the branching vales above; the way down which we must climb. Constrained and only way, from the moist seclusion of

Andorra's lofty little world up in the air, down to the spreading surface-ground of Spain.

Valira—passage from the mountains to the banded fringe of mountainous hills that step the land successively to broader and more habitable fullness, downward. Valira—channel of the melted snows, chill water from the saturated rocks ; uncoveted excess, in prodigal haste of transit to the brighter, thirstier land below. Valira—plenteously gathered, flowing downward to the hot and dissipating air, and heedlessly continuing to flow, down and across the shedding zone of too much, of excess, into the absorbent zone of not enough, of water coveted and led aside. Downward, to the point of change, where excess would give way to dry deficiency, then downward still.

A beautiful valley, this valley of the Valira, below Andorra la vieja, enhanced in beauty by the works of man. Here and there a track came down to the river and was borne across it by one slender span of brittle, fragile stone, the top rising to a flat peak in the middle, upheld by the limbs of an exquisite, frail arch below. Delicately wrought safety, in the freedom of space, the pointed arch a taut and crystallised security that hung the narrow thread of human track high in the open above midstream, stretched it tightly and strongly across the rocky turbulence below.

The simple, slim perfection of these bridges of the upper Valira called forth exclamatory admiration from you. We must cross one of them—the next. We crossed it and crossed back again, a narrow way suspended, for close wheels, and steep from either side, the parapets too low to give a feeling of security to anything but wheels. Foaming Valira underneath, and ourselves raised high on the narrow, sloping, unprotected way. The greater, therefore, was our pleasure in these bridges, after the tiresome safety of macadam road. They made the mind alert and quickened life.

We compared them with pictures we had seen of ancient Chinese bridges, but we knew them, truly, to be things of mediæval Spain, the first of truly Spanish things we saw. They were built for the old and narrow way up-valley, that crossed and tortuously recrossed the turbulent stream. Not so the modern road, which winds along the eastern valley side. And these bridges of five centuries ago serve nothing but a local use to-day, where tracks come down from the mountains to cross the stream and climb the other side. But, for us, they were the seal of Spain, Spain's overlap on the lower margin of this tiny, sequestered independence of Andorra.

We came abreast of Santa Coloma, a small village across the river, graced with a square church tower that made it beautiful. And here on the road, we met our first of Spanish priests, out walking. We declared them to be frowsy and impolite, for they ignored our greeting rudely.

The side streams below here were nearly dry, their valleys resembling the *arroyos secos* of the Californian mountains. This was the point of change, where the Valira crossed from the high zone of misty vales into the drier zone of pulverulent soil and ever thirstier air. And, to announce or emphasise the change, an irrigation flume appeared on either side of the river, leading the water off and aside, in channels that sloped downward not so steeply as the stream.

At San Julián de Loría, the largest village we saw in Andorra, but in character like all the others, there were crowds of children, and everyone was interested in us. But the liveliness and frankness of the place were pleasing. People stared at us openly, in a friendly way that was not rude. They would have liked to have spoken to us, to have been told what we were, but it was the curiosity of trust, not of suspicion.

Below this big, painted village of gay balconies, of laughter, and of play, the fields under the flume-lines of the valley sides were green, green and vivid. No greener than the fields up-valley that are watered only by the rain, but greener to the eyes—because, above the sloping lines of flume on either hand, the hills were brownish, dull, and dry. The change, the dryness of the land, had fully supervened.

Nor was it the only change. There were round arches in the barns of isolated houses now. The oblong grilles of Andorra were no more to be seen.

Conditions, and the influence, of Spain. The deepening overlap of Spain upon the mountain state, Andorra! The drier land, the bridges, and the arches of the barns!

The good, new road wound on. Towards us came a string, a long procession, of covered mule carts, all heavily laden. Each cart bore, on the side, a numbered plate of registration issued by Andorra. They laboured up the valley with their merchandise from Spain, and bore too, it seemed, the last of Andorra away from us with them.

For presently we stumbled, from the good road's end, on to a rutty track, a sketch, as it were, of the road's continued line. The splendid road for automobiles had become a road in disrepair, a lost road in a remote part of a new country.

We stopped, arrested by the change, the abrupt and only sign of an immediate change. Both up and down the valley all things near remained the same. But we were exactly on the surveyed line of the frontier of Spain, and murmured, both together, as if a miracle had happened, "Spain!"

We had crossed the tiny, mountain republic from one side to the other, and at last we were in the land of our long quest. The bridges, and the arches in the barns up-valley there—they bore conviction, now. It had taken us just a month to get to Spain.

SPAIN

"... como si ... el Pirineo se hubiese
convertido en otra Muralla de la China."
P. A. de Alarcón

XXII

THE HEAVY GATES

How gently the land of Spain had opened its gates before us! A change, a change for the worse, in the surface of the road—no more. Or so it seemed, in that so quiet moment of success, to us.

But, even then we knew, under the surface of our thought, that there was more. Dryness of the land had supervened. And, up the valley, we had recognised the Spanish grace of bridges that hang so crisply athwart the Valira. And more than that. For yesterday, when sheltering in the hut above Canillo, we had felt, and strongly felt, that everything was new, that this was foreign.

Truly, Spain had begun for us where Tombell turned his back on us and we our backs on him, in the snowed-up neck of the col on the crestline of the Pyrenees. Back, down into France, for him. On, down into Spain, for us. From there—from away up there!

Spain, then, had not opened its gates gently at all! It was merely opening them quietly, slowly, to admit us little by little. For Spain is not a gentle country, does few things gently, but does many quietly, without display. And whether it be Spain the land, or Spain the nation, Spain is unconcerned, indifferent to what strangers think, and seeks not to impress them. It was left to us, is left to whom you will, to find for ourselves, for himself, the quality and nature of this country, that slowly yields, or not at all, to those who know, or know not, how to seek.

Therefore, although we now stood, here, on the actual line between the kingdom and the mountain state, we had already been in the Spanish world some time—for more than a day. But the gates of Spain were not wide open even here, nor even yet!

There would be formalities. The Customs House to pass. We could see it ahead of us, a blue building on the left, a quarter of a mile down the road. And I believe that I stumbled along beside you to the "blue douane," as we called it, as astonished at the slow simplicity of this event, our attainment, our arrival in the country we had traversed the length of France to see, as if we had passed under triumphal arches erected in our honour at the frontier. What had I expected? As always, the dramatic, instead of an unarresting simplicity of things. But my feelings proved again the deep, strong power of simple things to stir us—you and me. For you responded. We were passing into Spain.

But formalities at the Customs House—*douane* (or *aduana*, as we would have called it, had we yet felt that we were right in Spain)—would mark no final entry into Spain. That would not take place until the road had passed through all the barriers that lay before us. For beyond the douane the valley became a narrow neck, a tortuous defile, and the winding road was lost to view.

And for the greater part of our first three days in actual Spain, we were threading a way through defiles in the mountains.

The whole meaning of the Pyrenees lies in this. On the French side they are an abrupt rampart to be scaled. On the Spanish side they are a descending succession of massive walls, across which difficult ways have been sawn, or filed, by the bright threads of rivers like the Valira. To me, the Pyrenees are the only perfect mountain *chain*, the only one I have seen that has fulfilled expectations. In all their length only six highroads lead across them. And this road of ours, no road across, but a mere road out of the mountains, was no less difficult than other roads that cross.

And so, for nearly four days, from the Port de Fontargente to Oliana, we were to pass through the defiles and intervening vales of the broad frontier-zone of Spain. And the land welcomed us not with a mere change in the condition of the road at the surveyed boundary-line, but with a belt of magnificence, though we knew not its meaning at the time.

And now, before us, in the mouth of the first defile, was the blue douane.

Sitting on a bench in the shade of the building were a squad of young douaniers and a young officer, all wearing smoke-blue uniforms and black, shiny hats. They looked at us gravely and the officer rose to deal with us. Everything was done in silence. A sweeping finger unmistakably invited us into the building; invited us, in the clearest way, to remove and open our packs and to produce our papers. The young man made a perfunctory examination of our effects, inserted his hand between the lining of each pack and the contents, and then copied our names in pencil into a large book. The finger requested us to sign opposite the entries, and, having done so, our papers returned to us, we were at liberty in Spain. It was all very formal, very polite, very ludicrous; and now that we were safely and completely approved by ye King of Spain hys servante, the silence simply had to be broken.

You found a few words of Castilian. It surprised and pleased the young man, and he asked some simple questions about our journey, not at all as a Customs officer, but in his unofficial capacity of Spaniard. We both attempted lame phrases, and you—who succeeded the better—asked about hotel charges and told him what we had paid at the Hotel Oros. He shook his head solemnly and said "Es muy caro, muy caro!—very dear, very dear!" and announced that five pesetas a day should buy board and lodging at the best of country hotels. This was good news, and we were satisfied also that we had made ourselves understood. When we said good-bye to this friendly young man who did not smile, and to his squad, we felt distinctly satisfied with Spain.

Below the douane the Valira was a considerable stream, flowing swiftly between the rocks, here in a brawl of cascades, there in a deep, quiet channel, still spanned, in a few places, by the fragile arches of the old stone bridges. There was a flume on each side of the valley, descending along the contours at a gradient so much gentler than that of the river, that the flumes seemed to us to be steadily climbing up the valley side. The one on our side ran for some distance close to the road.

We were soon aware that the hills were becoming much drier as we went south, and, after crossing a shrunken little tributary in a side valley, we found that the next one, and all succeeding ones, were quite dry, the gravel of their beds exposed. They were really arroyos secos, dry creeks. The contrast of brown above and green below the level of the flumes made the fields in the narrow bottom and on the steep, lower slopes, appear greener and greener to us as brown became the true colour of the world.

It was lonely along this valley, in spite of one automobile that passed us from behind; in spite of the brown autobus from Séo to Andorra, which passed us going up-valley; in spite of an occasional house of stone. For no villages disclosed themselves during the two hours we were in the defile of the Valira. The map showed that there were several, hidden among the hills—villages with harsh, surly Catalán names, some of them close enough to the forms of Castilian words to remind me of lizards with their tails cut off.

When came time to rest we chose a shady place on the rocks by the river. It was warm and quiet there. A few people were working in small fields by the road, and just downstream from us two men off duty from the douane were fishing. I remembered that tomorrow would be Friday, and this matter of fishing made me think of Norway, the old Hansa towns, Amsterdam—how Catholic Europe eats on Fridays the dried herring and haddock which northern, Protestant Europe catches and cures.

Your feet had rubbed, so you changed your socks. We were not disposed to conversation—it was warm and quiet; afternoon; and my mind went roaming. It seemed astonishing that Andorra, with all its beauty, had not lifted me to a greater height of appreciation, and I thought it must have been due to my exhaustion. I seemed to have noticed everything, with the wide-awake eyes of an overtired person, but the fatigue had narcotised my feelings almost completely. I had even noticed things without seeing them, and was thinking of a cemetery we had passed—near San Julián de Loría, I believe—a walled rectangle of ground, tiers of vaults to be seen through the gates, built into the thickness of the walls.

This burial of the dead above-ground (has there not been a great decline of pomp in our burial customs, or do we still do these things for the ordinary, simple people, with the same amount of ceremony?) seemed unnatural. They do it in places where the ground is too rocky for digging, or too swampy. I remembered your account of the vaults at New Orleans. But they seem to do it, too, in places where such evident reasons do not exist.

But, it was time to move, and what had burial to do with this warm afternoon, or with the peacefulness of our entry into Spain?

The narrow, twisted valley seemed to have shut the world out completely. There were no long views here; no towering grandeur of mountains, for the hills were close, and the further, grander hills beyond them were not to be seen. The sky was very near, and, had I climbed to the top of a hill, it would not have astonished me to have seen, not the magnificent confusion of the Pyrenees, but the quiet expanse of the ocean, beyond those enclosing hills of the Valira.

Our road became a switchback, and still, as we descended, what lay beyond the hills was hidden. Coming towards us were two strapping boys wearing loose, round caps, bérets alpins, and dark green uniforms—soldiers they were, off parade and taking a stroll. They greeted as cordially. Alpine troops.

Further on was a bridge over a side stream, guarded by what we took to be a military squad of tall young men in light blue uniforms with long trousers and red facings. Their leather equipment was yellow and they wore shiny black hats turned up in front and behind, and they had rifles. Actually, as we knew later, they were a party of the Guardia Civil, the Spanish gendarmerie, and they "stood to" at our approach, the N.C.O. placing himself squarely in the middle of the bridge. He asked politely for our passports, examined them rapidly, gave them back, and then, stepping aside, indicated with a fine gesture that we were free to pass on. He and his squad were so dignified in their duty that we explained ourselves briefly to them, and the whole squad wished us good luck when we said good-bye.

Over the next rise of the road there was at last a view of distance, and about a mile ahead, high up on a hill to the right, was the first vineyard. And soon, too, we met the first poppy of Spain, a solitary bloom in a small wheat-field below the road. I jumped down the bank and picked it.

The sun was getting low, the valley lay all in shade, and coolness was coming into the air. It seemed later than it really was.

At last we broke into the open view, to gaze across the wide, rich valley of the Segre. Red, red, heavy with the beauty of it, heavy with the burden of beauty, were the hills of the Sierra del Cadi in the distance before us, beyond the lady-green of the valley; and in the middle distance, immovable, impassable sentinels, were two superb buildings on a great painted hill. A fortress and a monastery, we supposed; but beyond doubt, one was a fortress.

The lines of these two spreading structures ran low and flatly; their turrets were low; and their long cliffs and angles encircled the red hill as its own proper crown, fitting, in their spread and height. With the heavy evening sky behind them the darkening mass had a formidable, watchful nobility, a thing on guard, commanding the Valira and the long, open gap in the mountains that stretches many miles to the east-north-east—the valley of the Segre, the vale of la Cerdana, and the main highway into France. This strong, mediæval thing—hill and fortress—which rears itself in mid-valley where the Valira joins the Segre, is the counterpart and opponent of the château fort of Foix on the other side of the mountains—the fossils of long dead hostilities.

Under the watching eye, it seemed, of the fortress, we descended into the wider valley, and when the road became nearly flat an unexpected modernity of things confronted us. We were in the midst of that unsightliness and spoliation of green fields that are the sure signs of the prosperity of a town. There were new brick buildings, some of them not even finished, evidently small factory buildings. There were tile works, and new water works bearing a prominent sign which stated that *aguas potables*, sanitary drinking waters, are now available to the public. And there was dust. These were the outskirts of Séo de Urgél.

Where our road joined the main highway into France we looked across the violated fields to the huddled mass of Séo, but could discern no way into the town. We asked a man in uniform, who wanted to direct us to the douane, a matter upon which he did not insist, and he indicated some cart tracks that would lead us into Séo.

Séo, viewed from outside, across the newly prospering outskirts, looked like a dusty antique in a new department store that is not yet fully stocked. And assuredly, if any town has an outside distinct from its inside, it is Séo. As we neared it we were still unable to discern an opening between the continuous mass of its tall outer buildings, but the cart track passed furtively between two houses, and at once we found ourselves in a shady labyrinth of narrow, crowded streets, and we knew not which way to turn.

An urban sense led us blindly to an important street, where, under a wide arcade, we picked as advisers a group of boys in uniform. I asked one of them to direct us to the Hotel M———, which had been recommended by the grave young man at the blue douane. At the first word the boy and his half-dozen friends stood rigidly to attention—a gracious compliment to two shabby strangers—and he answered in good French. An instinctive gesture stood the parade at ease, so to speak, and we talked. The boy said that the hotel would be hard for us to find, and that he and his friends would take us there. As soon as we moved the boy placed himself beside us and his friends "fell in" and followed in a respectfully silent group behind us. They were not being shy: they were being polite. The natural courtesy and candour of these lads made my heart beat a little faster, for they were healthy, prepossessing fellows, neatly attired in their dull green uniforms, and they looked soldierly. Strong lads in uniform give me a sense of something that is being wasted.

Our guide, who had been in France, explained that they were all in training for the Riff campaign (it shocked me to realise what I had forgotten—that Spain was a nation at war. *That* then, was why the valley of the Valira was full of guards and uniforms!). There were, said the boy, battalions of an infantry regiment and of a regiment of chasseurs alpins in training at Séo, though they had not been recruited from the province. (Never, I thought, had a nation at war received shabby strangers so confidentially.) His unit, he continued, would very soon be despatched to the front, and he, for one, would be glad to go, though he was not looking forward to the march to railhead, for Séo is not on the railway, and they would have to march for two days, as they had done when coming up.

Threading devious ways we suddenly burst into the open again, as we turned on to the end of a wide avenue that flanks the town on the south-west. On the right was the hotel—and it looked imposing. The boy said that it was a good hotel, where he occasionally had a dinner himself as a change from barrack meals. At the door they all stood smartly to attention, bowed, and said good-bye. They expected no more than our simple thanks, and they looked a very orderly squad of good friends as they went around the corner back into town. I conclude that their railhead would be to the east, or south-east, on the line that comes up from Barcelona through Berga. And—what happened to them all, in the Riff campaign? Don't you sometimes wonder about that?

In the hotel we were received by the señora herself, who led us up three flights of white marble stairs on which our hobnails scraped and slid, leaving shiny black streaks. The building was cool and spacious, with a gallery on each floor, surrounding a space that was open to the roof. There were much marble, many tiles, much glass and light ironwork. There were lounge rooms, smoke rooms, palms, and cool wicker chairs along the galleries, and we viewed it all with amazement. There were many people, many officers and their wives, all coming in from paséo—the evening promenade, and, as we passed one couple on the stairs, the señora asked them gaily had they enjoyed their walk. The answer was radiant—they *had* enjoyed it, very much indeed; and it seemed to me that here was something most remarkable. Everybody had been for an evening walk (that was why the streets in town were so crowded), and everybody had enjoyed it very much indeed! Your people, my people, must have more than a walk to cause them such evident pleasure; and even in southern France, where the promenade is a habit, promenade is more likely to mean going out to sit somewhere, than to walk. It seemed that in Spain, at least in Séo, pleasure can bubble up from simple sources.

The señora, or more properly, the patrona, took us to a front corner room, where we made poor work of discussing the terms, but the lady was so pleasantly reassuring, that we accepted her statement that all would be reasonable.

I don't know why, but we made a hobby of that room, and the idea of exploring Séo did not occur to us. It was only half-past five and the light was good, but we preferred to do other things. I, for instance, was anxious to put my bunch of narcissi in water, and in doing so was struck by the up-to-date and ingenious installation in the corner—a porcelain basin with nickel fittings and a tap that could be swung aside, to prevent one from bumping his nose or forehead when bending over the basin. The shelf below the mirror was all of glass and nickel, and everything was clean, bright, sanitary, like an operating room. You were absorbed in the study of a brown, stencilled frieze and a tiled floor, and commented that the whole place had an air of being cared for—an air we had seldom noticed in France.

And then, when I turned and suggested that you put your flowers in the same glass as mine, you looked at me with one of those guilty smiles that precede the confession of hidden delinquency—you had "left them behind, somewhere!" I had not even noticed that they were no longer under the flap of your pack, but I knew that smile, which is mainly in your eyes, and wondered just where you had made those simple, unperceived arrangements to rid yourself of an embarrassment without attracting my attention.

You stage little actions of that sort perfectly, and I always wonder what makes you confess when the evidence is noticed. I prefer to carry the petty dishonesty right through to a nonchalant, disarming explanation, spontaneous enough to seem sincere. Had this situation been reversed, for example, I think that, when you announced that you were going to put the flowers in water, I would have "staged" a mild shock of puzzled astonishment and said: "Why, mine must have dropped somewhere! Didn't you notice that they were not in my pack?" No—with all your ardour, I can't call you sentimental. She was such a jolly girl, and you left her gift to wither by the roadside. I think that she expected us to, believed that we would, carry garlands at least for this one day, to leave them where they would not die of thirst—perhaps in this room where we were to pass the night.

And this room—how it imposed upon us things more imperious than the exploration of Séo! The luxuries of running water and a clear mirror were the more important enjoyment, and we shaved, protracting the operation, as if it were a new experience to know the common conditions under which common men shave daily. When had we last been able to use running water and a large, bright mirror? Was it away back in Toulouse? It was so far back that I do not remember.

Then, too, there were our packs and their contents, not yet quite dry after the saturation they had suffered in the lost wildernesses we had conquered only yesterday. And now, in writing this, I realise for the first time, that we made no pause anywhere to congratulate ourselves upon that overwhelming victory of crossing the mountains. We had crossed, at the first attempt, in weather that would have driven ships to wreck, and we were the first who came through the Port de Fontargente that year! And we accepted, without thought or comment, the fact that we had done it! The mountains were behind us, and we were at last in Spain—that was all. And not even the testimony of these damp shirts, these limp little red dictionaries, limp note-books, suggested any more than what we had both felt from the beginning—that we were doing a splendid thing. But the shirts and the socks were spread over the round table, over the chairs; and the dictionaries were brought into the light of day, for use now.

Opportunity forced us to other activity; dirty clothes and running water produce laundrymen. And I think you wrote a letter, or something in a note-book. While one was occupied at the basin the other explored the room and the hotel. Your discoveries were excellent bathrooms, modern sanitary arrangements, more lounges and a whole bevy of comely housemaids who said buenas tardes to people as though they really meant it. I made only one discovery, that of a card on the back of the door, which announced the tariffs por persona, and por habitación—per head and per room—by the day, week, and month. The simple card was really a baffling document, for we were not aware which conditions applied to us, though the likeliest figures seemed reasonable; but we composed on the spot a few easy questions for future use at hotels, and we felt rather pleased with our determination to have clear understandings beforehand. This hotel would of course be all right, for a well-managed place in a fair-sized town would naturally have a regular scale of charges.

We were enjoying ourselves in most peaceful satisfaction in that room, doing trivial things, and much time passed unnoticed. Time enough had passed for the weather to change, and Séo was under a light shower of cool rain. We watched it from the window; watched the dying light of the day change the tones of the red hills when the rain ceased. We saw the people coming out again to walk in the boulevard below, and among them were many priests, portly, dignified priests; tall, emaciated priests; and in such numbers that we wondered how Séo could possibly support them all. There were bells ringing pleasantly in the falling night; and the dark street below, which joined the end of the boulevard and extended its line northward until it twisted into the labyrinth of Séo, was pleasant as the bells, for its shops were those of wheelwrights, blacksmiths, and woodworkers. Indeed, we were so content with it all that by dinner time we had not thought of exploring Séo.

The big dining room on the ground floor was full, and was like the dining rooms of all hotels. On many of the tables were curious vessels, like glass watering cans, or deformed, glass teapots, each with a stiff, oblique, tapering spout on the side opposite the handle, and they contained yellow-brown wine the colour of clear toffee. We had seen similar wine vessels at Encamp. The tablecloth felt very clean against my faded sweater and formless trousers. You, in your chocolate and blue pullover and soft, city shirt, cleanly shaved and content, looked as if you had just come in from tennis, too late to change for dinner. But I felt the need of that confidence we had assumed at Foix. I do not remember that first Spanish meal, except that a tortilla francesa—an omelette, followed the meat, and a salad followed the omelette, automatically. But I do remember about the wine. You, seeker of new experiences, who will even attempt to roll spaghetti and to manipulate chopsticks in public, had been observing the curious wine vessels, and concluded that they contained the ordinary wine of the country. Moreover, they were used like Tombell's wineskin—or in the manner of a watering can, the spout directed to the mouth but not in contact with it. We would have that wine. But the patrona, who served us herself, politely feigned to understand nothing of our harangue except that we wanted wine, and set before us a bottle of red wine labelled Ramez, with the assurances that we would like it, and that it was not expensive. And she did not stay to hear further questions. We had our first misgivings, and asked each other in unison: "Are we being stung?" But it was good wine, not unlike a rich, dry Bordeaux, and we had a feeling of justification, a feeling that on this first night in Spain we deserved good wine.

After dinner it was raining again, but we had had a very good day. Bed called us early. You, who prefer fresh air to some kinds of novelty, selected the bed near the window, and I retired to the screened alcove at the inner end of the room, wondering vaguely if a screened alcove made a room one or two habitaciones—a point upon which we were never enlightened as far as this hotel was concerned. And there came a knock at the door. A handsome, smiling maid asked if we needed anything, and bade us good-night with a buenas noches in which there was a genuine ring of interest.

Church bells were sounding, and people, crowds of people, were promenading in the streets below as far into the night as I remember. Séo went to bed very much later than we did, and I wondered if the rest of Spain observed late habits. But it was good, so very good and comfortable, in this obscure town in the mountains, which so flatly gave the lie to all my ideas about the backwardness of Spain, and Séo de Urgél lives in my memory as a place where we were content.

Morning in Séo has a clear vigour, and begins with the sounds of early industry. An anvil was ringing blithely below, and saws, crisply hissing and cleanly tearing through stout wood to the music of bells, put their own rushing energy into my muscles. We were out early. The prepossessing maid on the stairs greeted us with a buenos dias, as we went down trying not to slip on our hobnails. These warm, energetic Spanish greetings, so different from the perfunctory but obligatory bon jour, are assuredly not the expression of a decadent people, but of a people who value the happy privilege of being alive! Properly alive.

At the foot of the stairs a very unkempt person took charge of us. He was, to our astonishment, the patrón, and he conducted us to a back room where we had the simple breakfast of coffee and rolls in company with four or five workmen, whose conversation, for breakfast conversation, was lively.

When we asked the patrón how much we owed him he said thirty pesetas, with a suspicious readiness and without presenting any bill. This was calamitous, and we expostulated. The patrona was called, but she supported the patrón loyally, enumerating the items on her fingers. Thanks to having looked at the wine list, we were able to correct them on the price of the wine, and the bill was reduced to twenty-seven and a half pesetas—about a hundred and thirty-five francs!

At this rate of expenditure we would never get to Zaragoza alive, and there was no bank available to me at Lérida. It was imperative that we see Sr. Benventura Ribes, recommended by the father of the delightful girl at Escaldas, and get him to change our few remaining francs and most of your dollars at once. Truly, as I look at our Spanish accounts in the little green note-book, your heading to them, "Spain, where it grows more expensive," brings back the alarm I felt that morning. The patrón indicated an office on the far side of the boulevard in which, he said, we would find Sr. Benventura Ribes even thus early.

Platoons of troops were on parade in the wide boulevard, and presented a disappointingly unsmart appearance, very different from that of the neatly attired men we had seen off parade yesterday. Very different, we remarked, from the smart soldiers of France! Here, buttons were undone, many of the men were wearing white canvas shoes, and puttees were untidily rolled. The men, however, were all of good stamp. The boulevard was dusty, and the "office" of Sr. Ribes reminded me of other wooden buildings I know, on other wide, dusty streets, in country towns in Australia.

The gentleman himself, a heavy man of firm muscle, in a dignified black suit, was a sober personification of urbane prosperity. He was obviously a cultivated man, a changer of money and a dealer in tobacco, and he spoke French perfectly. He referred to a financial journal for the rates of exchange, and we received notes, and duros—sumptuous silver coins larger than dollar pieces, enough to take us to Zaragoza (if the patrón at Séo had grossly overcharged us), but there would be no money to waste. And Sr. Ribes politely settled a difficulty for us by recommending a brand of Spanish cigarettes, called "Favoritas," which reminded me somehow of a fossil coral called *Favosites*. They were quite smokable.

At half-past nine on this bright morning, without entering Séo again, we went westward over the dusty fields to join the highroad. This road was really an old, familiar road which had changed its name. Instead of Route Nationale No. 20, de Paris à Toulouse et en Espagne, it had become a less bombastic road, with its head at the opposite end, the Camino de Madrid en Francia. It was dusty, but the surface was good, and it was leading us straight towards the painted hill on which the fortress stands. The existence of Séo was rapidly eclipsed by country things, trees along the rivers, rich cultivation, mauve hills to the right, and red ones to the left. The map says that we crossed the Valira soon after we left Séo, but the bridge, and the Valira at that point, I have forgotten.

We climbed the slope of the red hill and rested, with the Valira at our feet, high above a place where an elbow of the river swings right into the hillside against red cliffs of clay. We rested because it was "time" and because our boots needed to be loosened and adjusted. And up behind us on the roadway there began to pass a procession of crowds of people in rough, working clothes, leading heavily laden mules towards Séo. Whether they, or the colour of the valley before us, the plane trees, and the fields of poppies burning red across the river, the red hills beyond, or the clicking insects in the dry grass beside us, interested us the most, I do not know, for the sun had climbed high, the air was full of a shimmering warmth, we were warm, dusty, and it was good to look in any direction.

Our resolution against laziness had by now led us into easy habit, and rests endured for no longer than ten minutes, the ten before each hour. So, at ten o'clock we were climbing the road again, past the descending procession of mules and carts. The heavy, balanced loads were mainly faggots and sacks of potatoes.

The map indicated the proximity of a village called Castell-Ciutat, and where the road passed through a saddle in our painted hill we came upon it, a village that was properly a pass, a narrow place through which the road must go. But it did not feel narrow, on the ample bosom of the hill, and was really an open, sunny collection of houses in the broad fold that lay between the fortress and the monastery. The street—our road—was full of people, moving aimlessly in the sunshine, leaning by the doorways, or sitting by the bright walls. We said good morning to a group of priests, who heard us perfectly, stared at us for a blank moment of unconcern, and returned no greeting.

To the left, above the village, were the brown walls of the tremendous fortified building, as unconcerned as the priests. Within them, perhaps, were many priests; perhaps even the great bishop of Séo de Urgél himself, Prince of Andorra, who seldom sets foot in his principality; perhaps, too, in a dark cell that may enshrine the most precious archives, Charlemagne's charter to Andorra, of A.D. 802, and all those other historical documents which were said to have been "removed elsewhere," lie buried. For priests who do not return greetings may also not return documents—if they happen to have them.

Our road, turning to the south-west, ran down to the gentler, green lands of the wider valley, the valley of the Segre. We were now using the Carte Michelin on a scale of 1:400,000, a clear, informing map, which said, by means of a green band beside the red one that marked the road, that the valley of the Segre, from away above, to away below here, was "very picturesque."

This wide, open valley, which curved behind us to the east and before us to the south, felt as if it were not in the mountains at all, and we believed that we had emerged from the Pyrenees into the open foothills. But this impression misled us completely. The valley here, and above here, is wide and shallow, and the Sierra del Cadi, whose line is gentle, was the only imposing mountain mass that we could see. It appeared to be quite low. Actually, Cadi is nearly eight thousand feet high, and the whole of this part of the valley stands nearly half a mile above the level of the sea. Yet how low it felt! And how we *knew* we had descended, from the pass, through Andorra, through the steep defile of the Valira!

The road ran nearly straight for a long way. At the top of a rise we paused for a last glance back at Séo, to find it much more extensive, and a much less beautiful mass, than we had expected, for it presented no accidents of outline, and was lowly placed and dull, subordinate to its richer background. We passed Arfa, a large, compact village on the far side of the river, and near it we encountered again those progressive signs of the establishment of industry that are making the outskirts of Séo unsightly.

Down the gentle, grassy slope to the right was a long, low, electric power house, new, the machinery not yet installed. A bright automobile stood at the main entrance, and another car passed us on the road, both American cars. Near the road were pieces of heavy machinery, and one large boiler announced in white letters that it came from Zürich. For a moment I thought of Pauline and her engineer uncle in northern Switzerland—but no; it could not be the same, for the boiler said plainly "Zürich." To the left a pipe line plunged steeply down the slope of a pine-covered ridge to some small, brick buildings that were probably valve houses, and from them it continued in a trench, and through a tunnel under the road, to the turbines in the power house.

The transmission line, with three drooping strands of cable between its low, skeleton standards of slim steel, ran southward from the power house in the direction of our line of march, but, unlike the sinuous line of our road, the power line ran perfectly straight, surmounting all obstacles. I emphasise the presence of this power line because it had for us an emotional value, was a thing that bore us company in lonely places; and also because we were not a pair of moonstruck seekers of antiquity and the beauty of decadence, unaware of the fine beauty that is in certain things of today. We saw, and we sought, all things on this journey, and we looked upon power lines as natural parts of the modern landscape, as natural, for us, as the fortress at Séo. They would, indeed, seem unnatural only to the dead and gone, who died before such things were known; and, as they can never come back to express their critical opinion, we are free to accept the full, whole world of today.

Beyond Arfa we rested (why have I forgotten the bridges of that morning? We crossed another, between Arfa and the power station). We rested at a place where cart tracks pass between hedges into a field, and we did so not only because it was time, but because, on the far slope of the valley floor, west and across the river, were two extravagant splashes of colour, an incandescent streak of crimson welded to a bank of coldly luminous yellow, like a strip of sunset laid along the ground—a long field of poppies beside a long field of what we thought was mustard. And beyond them, green grass, and the mauve hills—matte, and permanent.

The road, further on, approached the river, and the hills of our side came close to us, until they were at last beside us. The village of Pla de Sant Tirs I do not remember, and it must lie hidden in the hills, for we bought lunch at a solitary wayside shop very close to where it must be. The comfortably fat and smiling matron in black who stood behind the counter not only sold us lunch, but gave us at last that complete assurance in using the Castilian tongue which we so much needed. It was born, I think, when tins of preserved peaches on one of the shelves caught my eye, and I thought of them naturally, not as peaches, but as melocotónes. And, when she suddenly understood the meaning of a complicated request you made—that the contents of a bottle of mineral water be transferred into your canette—and exclaimed brightly: "Poner esto en eso?—Si!" our tongues were finally unlocked, to blunder daily less and less, and in growing confidence. So, we thought, we can talk to these people! We had a feeling that in some way it enhanced our value.

The lunch, of sardines, bread, wine, mineral water, peaches, and chocolate, we took to a shady grove of young poplars, mere slender poles, beside the river. The place was one where animals were taken to drink, and there were mud, shallow, stagnant pools, rank grass, and midges. But we found cool comfort easily enough.

That lunch, the best the wayside shop could provide, was indigestible, and emphasised the fact that we were in a country more foreign than France. Butter, cheese, milk, were unobtainable, and I wondered if we should ever taste them again. Perhaps we would have to adapt ourselves to new ways in the matter of lunch. But you have a stronger faith in the ubiquity of familiar things and in the efficacy of asking for them. You assume that they *ought to be* obtainable. And I admit freely—now—that this form of stubbornness often got things for us, when I, had I been alone, would have gone without them. But that lunch was indigestible—peaches, chocolate, sardines, mineral water!

After lunch, we found the valley becoming narrower, the river narrower and swifter, as we went south. The road, here on the eastern side of the Segre, ran under high cliffs of rugged stone. The brilliant, soft clays and shales of the open vale behind us had given way to massive, grey limestones, whose flaggy beds and solid bands had been thrown into great folds, for the beds sloped alternately to the north and to the south, as we descended. Hills were bold, rounded, dry, dull in colour, except where distance worked a smoky magic on them. Trees there were none, and the growth of prickly, stiff, aromatic plants was nearly everywhere sparse. A lean world of rock, hard, terrible, of enchanting monotony.

We had thought we were out of the mountains, but here, again, they had flung a strong chain across our path. For on this side the Pyrenees descend to the lowland in a series of parallel sierras, formidable, rough ridges that flank the towering central ridge.

These sierras are not long, continuous chains, but they dovetail, so to speak, one into the other. They have constrained the lesser streams to follow difficult, jointed courses, parallel to their line, so that the pattern of the small streams on the map is one of sharp elbows and angles which are nearly right; but the great streams, like the Segre, flow directly across the lines of the sierras, due south or nearly so, and their gorges through the harder rocks are the only possible lines of egress from the mountains.

We were again in a long defile, "*in loco angusto*," as Cæsar says, the tight place that must be passed. It was not that the hills on either hand were lofty, but that the loftier hills hidden by them, the mass of the sierras, forced, confined everything to this one, tight, wriggling line of movement. We were between the western prongs of the Sierra del Cadi on the one hand, and the mass of the small Sierra de Arés on the other. I find a dull splendour in such places, and it met a response in your evident fascination with this hard, roughly naked gorge. The river, between walls of rock, had become very narrow, and was entrenched far below the road—thirty, fifty feet. The road itself was in many places a winding ledge, blasted out, between the cliffs of the hills and the cliffs of the bottle-green river. We were soon aware that it was a new road, a splendid feat of engineering, for, in niches, on broad ledges, were traces of an old, old road which had crossed and recrossed the river painfully, by many a narrow bridge, a single arch of slender stone, but the old road is now in ruins. The wide, new road keeps to one side. By the old road, here and there, were signs, traces, of the slow travellers of bygone times—an overhanging cliff blackened by forgotten fires; a cave, where fires had burned and men had slept so long ago, a sign almost imperceptible, more an odour, a spirit, than a mark.

And also, continually near us, with us, was the power line, running straight, almost joyfully, across utterly inaccessible places, up and down and onward. At several localities, down by the water, there were small buildings, observing stations for the hydroelectric development of the Segre, in which the level and velocity of the river would be recorded. Stairways cut into the rock led down to them, but the places were deserted. So close were they to the water that I concluded that the river is truly entrenched between its high walls, and has sawn its way down into the rock during a slight, general rising of the mass of the land, that has taken place during the last few tens of thousands of years; for the little stone buildings must be beyond the reach of the flood waters.

I do not recall that we saw a single living thing until we were more than half way through this defile. We passed the dry mouths of several side valleys, and up those valleys there would be people, for the map showed one village called Tost, on a dry stream that enters the defile from the east. Half way? How did we know that we were more than half way through the defile? But much of the understanding of this journey is *post hoc*, has only developed through the power of the mind to dissolve the past and to fuse it again into a whole whose parts are grouped in order and properly related. What we did know, from the time we entered the defile to the time we emerged from it, was that we were going down, down, and down, until at last we ceased to believe that we were doing any but an impossible thing. The road went down; the gleaming surface of the river had a slope that was perceptible to the eyes ; and we *felt* our descent, mile after mile, with the feelings of a passenger in a train that is running downhill. We felt it until we knew that to descend so far was impossible, was not true. And, disbelieving what we knew we were doing, we continued to descend.

At last came a bridge, two bridges, and, though they brought no arrest of the descent, they brought us change. One was a business-like bridge for the new road; the other an attenuated, graceful old bridge of mellow brown stone for the old road, and it was in a fit condition for use. We crossed by the old one in preference to the new, and found it wide enough for a narrow cart, with a parapet no more than a foot high. Then came changes.

Hills were a little gentler, and, in rare niches, on tiny patches of hoarded soil, were a few olive trees. Rounding one bend we came to a lonely house, outside which stood a woman and several men whose bicycles were propped against the wall. As we passed out of their sight they watched us with the interest of people beholding the unreal.

We got to the mouth of the dry Rio de la Vansa, which opens the eastern hills, and the defile itself became more ample, the rocky hills less forbidding, and in places they were clothed with a rich growth of aromatic shrubs.

When the shadows began to throw themselves across to the eastern hills we stopped, at a place high above the river, to watch the antics of a large flock of exceedingly variegated goats that were browsing on the other side. With a calculating unconcern they betook themselves from one perilous place to another, up or down, streams of goats dislodging streams of stones, yet not a goat capsized in any acrobatic difficulty; and their headlong speed and insecure foothold seemed to give them no trouble at all when a leader would at times change his mind, swerve to go somewhere else, and the rest would follow him. Udders and agility—no, they are not incompatible. Even the Swiss cow cavorts in an alarming manner, which probably accounts for the condensed milk. Like the little groups of olive trees, these goats seemed as if they could belong to nobody at all in so desert a place. But there was a boy tending them and how he got to where he was is an insoluble problem.

Another bend brought us past a long, rectangular, whitewashed building that announced itself, in large black letters, to be a Casa de Peones camineros, a shelter house for roadmending gangs. Its windows and doors were bolted and it slept the empty time away. How long it had been sleeping, would sleep, we could not guess.

At last the defile began to open out, and there were gentler land and olive groves before us. Quite suddenly the road emerged from the iron hills, shook itself free from the bondage of the river, swung to the right, to undulate gently, upwards, to Orgañá. It seemed that our interminable descent was ended. We had been in the defile for more than two hours.

Orgañá—a compact group of tall houses, high on a broad slope, away from the river, dominated, it seemed, by the square, heavy tower of its church. It was girt on all sides by terraces of cultivated ground. The road dipped for a moment, to cross the wide, dry shingle bed of a stream that comes from the west, the stream that opens the vale of Orgañá between the rolls of the sierras to the north, and the roll of the Sierra de Boumort to the south. But we did not stop to gaze over the freedom of the blue vale. There was a more pressing concern. Would we find a bed in the village, or would we have to go further on—it would be *much* further?

The road itself was the main street, and it led us past a light blue building on the right, the Casa cuartél de la Guardia civil, the Gendarmerie in fact. Opposite this building were some shops and cafés and at one café we asked to be directed to the fonda. One asks by courtesy for the fonda in Spanish villages, a kind of hotel of good standing, where one's mother and sisters would be comfortable. The proprietor of the café, who insisted upon speaking French less comprehensible than our Castilian, took us to the building next door, which, though it bore no sign, was the fonda, and a comfortable one.

A most pleasant woman gave us a front room with two beds in an alcove at the inner end, a plain room, but scrupulously clean, and the price was satisfactory.

We set at once to improving our appearance, only to find that the primitive iron tripod-stand, which held a wash-basin with a plug in the bottom, had no pail on the platform underneath. With a red dictionary in my hand I sought a bright chambermaid, explained the trouble, and, with much laughter, we were given a pail and plenty of water. This was the only difficulty we had at the pleasant fonda of Orgañá. When we felt like gentlemen, we went downstairs to inquire about dinner, to hear that we could not dine until half-past eight! This was bad news. The shadows that crept over the defile had deceived us and it was really very early, for we had arrived at the village at four o'clock. A light breakfast, an early and indigestible lunch, and now, three hours at least, to wait for dinner! You suggested coffee. Coffee let it be!

We went to the café and sat in the open. Coffee was brought, several times, in glittering, stalked glasses, and with each coffee came a glass of water. The loaf sugar was served in tissue paper packages containing five lumps, the paper twisted into a neat tassell of shreds at each end. At a neighbouring table were two officers of the Civil Guard, greatly contrasted in height and girth, who looked at us with inactive interest. They caused us to wonder what the guard could possibly be guarding in the blue building opposite, and how; for nothing seemed to interest them much. But as yet we did not understand the duty of this admirable corps of rural police.

Asses and mules laden with dense cushions of lucerne and clover were coming in from the fields; carts were passing with similar loads; and two brown motor 'buses arrived from opposite directions, tarried to discharge and take up passengers, and passed on. And, amidst all the deliberate press of activity, darting ragamuffins played noisily and hens moved with imperturbable oscillation of the neck. But—what a long time to wait for dinner! Coffee, as poor persons who live in lodgings know, removes the ache from the void, but it does not make time pass any more quickly. There were the vale, the fields, the river. Why not walk?

We climbed a gentle slope to the west of the village and found ourselves in the "fields." Flat patches, each of perhaps several acres in extent, separated by low terraces of neat stonework, and by rough, narrow pathways. There was a primitive, winding mule track through them, most likely the main road to Cabó, the village away up the valley to the west. Many of these clean-looking fields were olive groves, the trees standing about twenty feet apart. In others the crops were high—lucerne and clover, as we had seen in the village—but in most of them the earth was bare and newly turned. I put a sheltered corner of one field to an improper use, and realised once more that some of the deep satisfactions of life have nothing to do with dignity.

Seen from the high fields Orgañá was a compact mosaic of yellow, ribbed roofs, and it occurred to us here, I think, that from Séo we had been among houses very different from the tall, brown, stone buildings and low-pitched slate gables of Andorra. Houses were tall here, but they were painted in chalky hues, mainly shades of blue, and were roofed with yellow, half-round tiles in two layers, the hollows of the lower ones turned upward, those of the upper ones downward, so that the edges of the upper tiles rested in the gutters of the lower ones. Such a roof is rain-proof, and the air space wards off some of the heat of bright days. Such a roof is also a thing of great beauty, and can enter into strange conspiracies with light.

This vale of Orgañá was a beautiful place, blue with the blueness of smoke, and soft as spider web. It is nothing more than a trough in the limestone sierras, made a little opener by the stream that comes down from Cabó to pass under the road in a bed of dry shingle. But the hills are imposing, and the distance grand. Not far to the west was a big hill with a tiny house perched on the very top, over the brink of a precipice, and we wanted badly to go up there—discussed quite seriously the practical difficulties of living in such a hermit's eyrie. Would one have to toil up a steep track every day with the bread? And far to the south was a dominating hill or mountain, which rose high above the intervening sierras. We called it "Gibraltar," and knew that to-morrow the road must lead us close to its foot. It is probably the peak called Coscolél on our map, and if so, is nearly five thousand feet in height. On many of the lower slopes of the sides of this vale, where the steep rock meets the shallow farm land, were clay-red vineyards, bare between the rows of low-cut vines not yet in leaf.

The soft delicacy of these things kept us in so quiet a mood of slow-moving contentment that we hardly noticed the mists gathering over the hills, and the threatening sky to the south. A sudden perception of chill in the air, and a kind of bright darkening of the light around us, foretold rain very soon. We went quickly down to the village, passing, on the way, a large white building not yet finished—a school, or perhaps a hospital.

Orgañá has narrow back streets overhung by balconies, and the lower stories of most of the houses are what we called "fortified"—the doors are heavy, studded with nails, and have big bolts; the windows are small; and the ground floors are not used as dwelling room. On many of the balconies were neat stacks of firewood, bundled twigs, like the petit bois of France, and as far as we could discover the ground floors were used as stables.

One street, in which everyone makes chairs, gave the village its meaning as a wood-working community. There were many shops, the premises of some extending right through from one street to the next, and Orgañá seemed to sell nothing but white canvas shoes with rope-fibre soles, and oranges; for there were shops and shops full of nothing but canvas shoes, and other shops full of nothing but oranges. There was an odour to those streets, like the odours of Oriental streets, a pleasant compound of their activity, the essence of fresh orange peel, curled wood shavings, hemp fibre, and new canvas.

One such street led us to the massive little church, which is prominent when seen from the north only because it lies on the edge of the village. Houses abut against it, lean over it, and it was dark inside as the church of Treignac, for the tiny windows were quite inadequate to admit enough of the dim light of the streets to reveal any object within. It seemed that during service the light must come from the votive candles and those of the altar. So futile was our investigation of this dark little church that we never again, I think, troubled ourselves about examining the interiors of Spanish village churches.

The rain had not fallen, or had fallen elsewhere, and the evening was still bright. We went down a steep bank and then along an embanked road between garden fields, to the river, and found a light suspension bridge, which we crossed. The Segre was wide, shallow, with much grey-blue shingle exposed where it swept around a bend. There were fig trees near the bank, and we sat down, to observe, almost in silence, what happens in a quiet place in half an hour. At this place water passes by—nothing else happens. But at times there is much water, turbulent, savage water that tears away the banks and robs the fields of painfully tilled soil. To deal with such violent moods of the Segre in flood, the farmers of Orgañá have pushed stout banks or piers of shingle out from the hollow bends of the riverside nearly into midstream. They point obliquely down the current like so many prongs, and they brush the flood waters out and away from the concave banks, and so reduce the scour. But we saw the river in a gentler mood, making only the faintest rippling sound for so swift a thing. A small girl came down from the fields behind us and led a grey ass across the narrow bridge and back into the village. A boy was minding a couple of goats down below the bridge on our side. A few people moved about in the fields opposite, or, ceasing work, made a slow way back to the village. Time goes peacefully in a quiet place, if one be in the right company. We stayed longer than half an hour, and walked, or loitered back in the dusk, not because we wanted dinner, not that now, but merely because it was getting dark. How easily we become captives to the spell of places! Three hours ago we had been impatient, had set out to kill time, but had given ourselves up, unaware, to the softness, the misty peace of this rock-girt vale!

Dinner came, its yellow soup, its meat, its omelette, its salad, its quince conserve, all undistinguished, but all very good to eat. We began to feel that pepper is unknown in Spain, and to find that a small measure of the strong, brown wine is enough. Luckily, in many hotels and fondas, it is served in bright glasses, but I felt that somewhere along the road we would be forced to manipulate a spouted carafe. The only other diner was a commercial traveller in city clothes, who took not the slightest notice of us. But our wants were supplied by so many comely, smiling maids, who all seemed of equal authority, that a sense of anxiety overcame us, and you expressed it perfectly. "Which,"you asked, "is the woman we have to tip?"

To the café afterwards, for coffee and very necessary cigarettes—I had been enduring famine. The place was crowded with ordinary-looking men who were all talking at once. The patrón inflicted more French on us, and went out himself to get the cigarettes, returning with a packet of the "*Arrendataría*" brand, the only ones obtainable, curious objects, the ends of the paper tucked in to prevent them from unrolling, for it had no gummed edge; and the tobacco itself was more like chips of bark and twigs than leaf. They were my tribulation in Spain, and I tried many unsuccessful ways of smoking them. The café was too confined, so we passed out through the back door into a dark, narrow street, for a night prowl. But everybody in the village was indoors and the houses had turned their backs to the night. We went quietly to bed.

You, who, having changed the dollars, held the purse, settled the account in the morning for twelve pesetas, a considerable improvement upon Séo, but you concealed from me the stratagem you adopted in order to avoid tipping all of the five or six lively maids. They all asked brightly "Ha bien descansado Usted?—(making it sound like *descansa'o*)—Did you sleep well?"

The guard was already posted at the Casa cuartél when we marched out of Orgañá, a fact which interested us, but it had probably been posted all night. The village was soon lost to view, and we fixed our eyes upon "Gibraltar," and considered that an hour should bring us abreast of it. The transmission line, which ran on the far side of the river, came closer and closer as the hills drew imperceptibly together again to make a double strand of the river and the road, a treble one of river, road, and power line. We passed another Casa de Peones camineros or "caminero house," as we began to call them, and this one was not asleep, but had a conscious air of being occupied. And soon we passed the camineros themselves, a gang of about twenty men strung along the road, breaking road-metal to level up the bumps and hollows. They looked at us curiously, but returned a chain of pleasant greetings and were not inquisitive.

It was slowly borne in upon us that we had entered a third, and, as it proved, our last defile. Again, the whole world seemed to have been tilted very gently to the south, for the river and the road were perceptibly running downhill. For how long a distance we would feel this protracted descent it was impossible to say, from the map, but we accepted it. We had accepted it in Andorra and in the defile of the Valira as a natural thing to be expected. But yesterday, after having felt that the vale of Séo was not a high place, it seemed that, in spite of our descending, no further descent could be possible, and we reached the limit of the mind in its grasp of magnitude. To-day, if the road, the river, wished to descend for ever, towards inaccessible and receding oceans, even

Through caverns measureless to man,
Down to a sunless sea,

well, we would merely have voiced no objection, shown no wonder, for anything is possible. The visible world is only the appearance of infinity. There is room for more than everything in a man's soul, which does not end where the light fails, but ever gives more secrets to those who are not afraid of its darkness. A limestone gorge is one of the ways to them, and we were prepared to follow this one without question, to-day.

Out of nothing came the wind. It caught us in its angry gusts at every elbow of the road. Leaves and dust were driven along the ground, scooped up into the air, thrown down again in showers about us, and again hurried along the ground in irregular agitation. No violence in this wind, no real savagery, but a powerful anger, frustrated by the jutting rocks, chafed by the sinuous funnel of the gorge. It pressed us along, helped us, tried us with its nervous impatience, its unexpected blows and beatings, its gusty showers of dry grit, until it communicated some of its own wilful discontent to us. Until we overcame it by becoming part of it and agreed to be pushed and jerked along.

High up on a ledge to the right, in a wide niche of the cliffs was Coll de Nargó, packed in tightly, house next to house. Not a place where stray travellers might expect shelter for the night! Yet the patrón of the café at Escaldas had said that down this road "Tout le monde fait aubergiste—Everybody is something of an innkeeper!" But we were glad that the preceding night had not brought us trustfully to Coll de Nargó. That sort of place would willingly provide lodging for an unknown muleteer but would turn away any who did not bear the signs of labour on their palms. Why was the village there? It meant that there were openings in the hills, little olive groves, trees for firewood, pasture for goats, yet none of these things was visible "in commercial quantity."

But indeed, this gorge of to-day, so like that of yesterday in all essential things, showed degrees of difference which made it more and more a habitable place as we descended. It was opener, and the hills were higher, more imposing, for the simple reason that the openness allowed the more distant hills to be seen—the hill beyond the nearest was in most places visible. "Gibraltar" itself was often before us, changing its form steadily, but seeming no nearer. The limestones were less massive, more markedly banded, less niggardly of soil than those of yesterday, and here and there was a tiny olive grove. In a few places there were even trees by the road, planted ones; and stunted, scrubby pines appeared on the hillsides and became more numerous, more robust, as we proceeded.

We sought shelter from the wind in a small side valley, a dry place, where we discovered lavender, a tree that bore curious nuts, and, in the dry grass, a plant with pink, cup-like flowers. It brought a vague sense of kinship, of the light bonds that are thrown like a gossamer web about the world, to find in the remote Pyrenees plants that grow in Australian gardens—the lavender here; the fleshy, prim rosettes of green at a forgotten place further back, which we call "Irish roses" in Australia—refined old ladies who grow pinks and candytufts use them there for formal borders; the narcissi of Andorra; the yellow pansies and the violets of that other world on the French side; all were familiar, from childhood, like the wild asters of the United States, the "Michaelmas daisies" of our Australian gardens. And underlying the sympathy which these plants established was a feeling of discovery; of having found the true home of plants that are naturalised aliens in my own country. When we moved on, the wind had become more spasmodic, elastically playful, and the rounder hills, drawing closer to the river, quite hid "Gibraltar"—or Coscolél. A pleasing monotony, the deception of imperceptible change, drew us on and on, ever lower, lower, winding between the blue shoulders of the Sierra de Turp on the east, and the Sierra de Boumort on the west. The power line seemed to invite us to pursue it, chase it to its destination as it rose and fell, and actually I had some misgivings, for you were talking of the attractions of Barcelona, as you had talked of those of Carcassonne.

By the time we arrived at the bridges we had become used to pines and bushes and grass, and to a tree by the river here and there. Here too, a new bridge and an old were close together, the latter with a tower at one end, and, on a crag high above the other end, were the ruins of a small fortress. Evidently, this was the only convenient place of crossing in the defile, and one of defensive importance in the days of the old road—the days of slow travel and graceful bridges, graceful then because a small bridge was a big undertaking for engineers.

Suddenly (it was your discovery) the power line left us, like a fleet thing running away! Two standards on a mountain crest, rigid webs of airy filaments against the sky, and it disappeared. Where had it gone—whither was it going? Doubtless, over these easier hills, across into the valley of the Cardoner, which would lead it straight down to Barcelona.

What had it meant to us? The companionship for two days of a courageous thing, a thing that blithely surmounted difficulties in the wilderness? Yes, and more.

These things, transmission lines, wireless installations, great bridges, fine ships, the engines of trains, trains themselves, sweeping great dams of concrete, pieces of artillery lovely as tigers: are the fine beauty of our age, slowly perfecting itself now in the lines of metal and manufactured stone. In the structural support of roofs, the forms of tall skyscrapers, the lines of automobiles, the age is groping, after a long and ugly transition, towards the real beauty that lies in the knowledge of the economy of its materials. The Gothic of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries found it in stone; the nineteenth century clipper ship found it in wood; and we are finding it in steel and glass and concrete—the old balance of line, mass, and proportion.

Our power line stood for all that history of trial, experiment, and laborious perfection which is more prosaically called adaption to purpose, and here it had left us! To go to Barcelona, to drive trains, or bobbins, or perhaps merely vacuum cleaners! Its departure changed the meaning of this place we were in—and foretold a change.

For below here the slope of the beds of limestone assumed a steady direction, dipping persistently to the north, which means that the mountains turn their edges *up* to the south. Other rocks appeared, sandy bands, clay bands, and their alternations led us through rocky canyons with precipitous walls, and open stretches of gentler valley.

In one of the latter was a low, lightly wooded spur on which the timber was being cut and the logs sent sliding down a steep slope to the river. For the first time, the river was being *used* to carry things. Surely, that meant that we had ceased going down and down, and had come to an easier flow of the waters, a slackening and a relaxation of the world's effort to exist!

We passed under the foot of a precipice on the top of which was a small monastic building, a shrine among the trees and rocks: the road swung around a low crag; and Spain opened wide before us. We were through the barriers, right through!

Oliana—blue, Peramola—brown, lay in a rolling spread of green hills and fields and woods. Far in the distance behind Oliana was a low sierra, an eastern extension of the Sierra del Monsech, bordering the sky with a vivid strip of richest maroon, deep, strong in its colour—the topmost band of clay, or shale, of the sierra; bare, exultant, a colour that sang like a harmony of male voices. Only in the darkest of oleanders and in the hue of a rare bougainvillea does that colour exist elsewhere.

We were on a high platform, at the edge of the Pyrenees. A gusty place; an overlooking place. An end. On a knoll by the road were the ruins of a small castle. At our feet the Segre, braided into several channels after flowing over a weir of squared flag-stones. Oliana was perhaps two kilometres away to the south; Peramola was five to the south-west and beyond the river: two pretty towns, their masses nicely grouped, themselves nicely spread out for display—the one clinging to the hillsides, the other basking on a broad slope of green. This was like looking across the Land of Canaan, and we looked long.

We thought, after some time, that the astonishment of this burst into Spain was over. We had been two and a half hours in the defile, and the Land of Canaan would be a land of plenty. We would go to Oliana to buy lunch.

But the first steps of the descent revealed poppies and clover, pink clover, blood-red clover, a sheer extravagance of exuberant blossoming. We passed down and through this splashed palate of a field, and, at the first house, we turned and looked back. Crimson, pink, blood red, and a green field; the river shining; the wall of the mountains rising in cliffs and shoulders and receding summits—mauve, feather grey, yellow, ochreous red, all the tints of limestone masses, under a clear morning.

But people are incredulous about colour, about the intensity which is there for all to feel; and their eyes deliberately tone it down to correspond with the weak, mean shadows of real feelings which are all that they dare to express. They look upon the faithful canvasses of artists with mistrust and disbelief; they suspect enthusiasm; and they fear the brightness of truth. Were we to tell them of this foreground, these hills, would they believe *us*?

We turned towards Oliana once more, unaware that we had wrung from Spain the first of her secrets. Or had Spain endowed us with her own confidence and trust?

In Spain, one must look back.

XXIII

INNER CATALONIA

(*a*) *The Woodland*

It was lunch time. It was Saturday. It was Spain! Saturday? Only a week ago we had been in Foix. Nonsense! Foix? There wasn't any such place—there was only Spain. There were only you and I in Spain, free from everything, out of the reach of everything; for the whole world of claims, responsibilities, duties, affections, activities, had, between it and us, the wall of the Pyrenees—and the ocean. We were inaccessible; had attained a freedom in which to live a while for nobody but ourselves. And it was lunch time.

Oliana, the " little " town, proved to be quite big, and the only part of it that lay along the road was a string of hotels, unexpected, unbelievable; for what can bring travellers to Oliana in such numbers as these hotels implied? The town itself rose in terraces to the east, and a narrow cobbled street led us up into it.

The fruit shop on the left, which looked promising, was a dingy box where they spoke nothing but Catalán, and it stocked none of the things we wanted. A boy took us to the bakery, further up the shady street on the right, a narrow compartment where there were dark woodwork and a sour smell, and where, for sixpence halfpenny, the woman sold us bread and obligingly filled our canettes with wine from her own domestic supply. When we got back to the fruit shop there was a member of the Guardia civil there, who told us in good English to order what we wanted. This pleasant fellow, who had been called in to help the foreigners, had been in England, and with his assistance we "compiled" a lunch better than the one of yesterday, but so lacking in individuality that I have quite forgotten the menu.

We carried our supplies far out of the town to a sheltered place among stone walls and trees at the foot of a steep hillside. On the other side of the road a dusty field of fine, green wheat sloped towards the river. And, beyond the river, Boumort, the sierra through which we had so recently passed, lay with its flank exposed, a rough, masculine succession of climbing ledges and cliffs, truly rugged in aspect, and far more formidable to traverse than the grander, but gentler, feminine curves of the corresponding hills between Varilhes and Foix.

Large patches of the wheat in the field across the road had been beaten down by the wind, and the tender, white inside of the crop lay untidily exposed. It stirred your understanding of rural things and you talked of the losses farmers have to sustain when the wind levels a crop; of the impossibility of raising the weak shoots again, once they have been bent and pressed beyond their strength to stand. But the wind had died down to an occasional puff that raised an eddy of dust here and there along the road; and along the road came the traffic of slow, country life, as we ate our lunch.

First came a woman driving sheep and goats. Then a man, with goats and deliberate cows—cows that I was afraid you would remember with inspiration the next time we should drink coffee. The flock passed by, stirring the lazy dust, but a boy, who came trundling a wheelbarrow of curious design, did not pass by. He left the barrow on the roadside close to us, and went down into the fields with a sickle. The barrow was a kind of perambulating box with large round holes in the lid or top, so that cans, most likely milk cans, could be stood in it and trundled about in safety. The boy, all the time we were there, was cutting young wheat far down in the field, and when we left he was still working.

The road of the afternoon was pleasant, with little, however, to stir deep interest. There were hills, fields, trees—by the river many trees—and, for scenery, that which is called to the mind by the simple word "country."

But we were nearing a point that I approached with growing apprehension. From Séo no road of any importance had joined the road we were following, but the map indicated an important one coming in where we were to cross a stream called the Riera Salada —the main road to Barcelona. The map did not extend to Barcelona, and I had cautiously said nothing about the significance of this road from the south-east, but my mind was full of the question—would you, when we came to the Riera Salada, suddenly awaken to the meaning of this road, and decide impulsively that we must go to Barcelona?

I began to feel strongly that the journey was in danger; that, like Don Quixote, I too might have set out for Zaragoza to find myself going to Barcelona instead, to meet there, perhaps, something resembling his downfall—or, at any rate, an end to a journey that was supposed to end at Madrid. No! I could not go to Barcelona. Yet neither would I be able to resist your impulse, face your disappointment, were you suddenly to say "Come, A.; it doesn't matter where we go. Let's go to Barcelona!" Perhaps—a great city, where there would be orchestral music, drama, ships, and the sea. It would be splendid to go there together, but going there did not belong properly to this journey.

We came to the Riera Salada and found it dry, habitually dry, it seemed, for there were shrubs and bushes in the very bed of its course under the bridge. And at the lonely, ugly hotel by the bridge I could get no cigarettes.

We passed the junction of the roads and put the bridge between us and any suggestion of Barcelona, but the possibility of suggestion remained, on the map. What does Riera mean? A strange word, not in the "Spanish" dictionary—a Catalán word, evidently applied to small rivers and streams. Catalán—the language of Barcelona.

Hills became drier, sandier, and the road more hilly. Though never far from the forested river-bank, we were never long in sight of the river.

At one place we sat down on the sandy, hillocky ground among the stiff shrubs, and an old caminero, who had a brass badge in his cap to tell everybody he was a caminero, came up and tried to draw us into conversation. He was timidly inquisitive about us. "Qué hacen Ustedes?—what are you people doing?" he asked. An innocent and voluminous question, but we assumed the baffled look of incomprehension, and he gave it up. Do you remember? At the place where we were glad we had not thrown away the bundle of *Daily Mails* given us by the ladies at the restaurant near St. Paulet.

In an angle of the road we found Castellnou de Basella, a tiny place, up and away from the skirting road, and labelled back and front in blue—a very significant place though, for, in the hollow of that great bend, we came as near to Barcelona as we were ever to be. It was exactly a hundred kilometres off—three days' march—and due south-east. Cautiously, I omitted to mention the fact, and we left it behind on the beach.

We climbed, and looked down from a high place into the river, broad and shady between the slender, upright trees. Almost at our feet was an extraordinary ferry operated by the swift current, a large punt, attached by a cable and pulley to another, slack cable that spanned the river close to the water. The black punt moved obliquely, slowly across towards us, and in it was a patient, motionless mule. Down the current logs were floating, two and three together, in the line of the stream; lying irregularly and moving slowly in deadwater; stranding here and there on shingle banks, to wait for men in boats, or for flood waters, to free them again into river-burden.

Then we went down, south-west from this angle of the river, the river sliding away from us further and further as the cool evening darkened so slowly. By our schedule for the journey we ought to have slept at Pons that night, but Pons was far off, too far off, and Tiurana was near. Moreover, we would have done nearly a normal day's march by the time we got there, and so must sleep at Tiurana.

The place lay off the road on a gentle slope towards the river to our right, but by the road was a lonely fonda. The woman there was not discourteous, but affirmed quietly, immovably, that she had no rooms. There was, she said, a good posada in the village that would certainly accept us; and she added inquiries about ourselves, none too well understood by us, but I think she asked us were we circus men, strolling players. We did not stop long to answer but went to look for the good posada of Tiurana, on a Saturday evening, surely a good day for posadas. And, from this distance, I think we can say that Tiurana was not only of unexpected interest, but is a memory happier than the actual experience of the time.

A young woman directed us to the posada, and the turning of a corner took us right inside the town, just as at Séo, at Oliana, and, had we noticed it, as at Orgañá too. We entered a tall house with nothing to distinguish it from other tall houses, climbed a dark flight of stairs, and were in the posada. We found the patrona, a worn, resigned woman of middle age, in the kitchen preparing food. She was alone. To our inquiries about board and lodging she made no definite reply but seemed rather dumbly scandalised and disposed to offer a kind of passive resistance. We decided to use our most delicate diplomacy; to arrange for a meal first, and to approach the subject of lodging when the lady had become a little used to us.

Our evident unwillingness to go away forced her to accept the idea of feeding us, and after a long discussion we were at last able to persuade her that nothing out of the ordinary need be prepared, that no messengers need be sent out for meat, that we would be content with such a meal as she was then preparing for the house. We had noticed crisp lettuce and other green vegetables that foretold a satisfactory dinner. With our Castilian and the patrona's Catalán it took both time and art to bring us to a partial understanding, but our expressed desire to cause her no unnecessary trouble only increased her suspicion of us. To her we seemed to be what they call in the United States a "smooth proposition." She agreed, however, to give us dinner, and ushered us into the public room, a lofty, L-shaped room with a wide, glass door opening on to a side street of higher level than the front street.

We sat on hard chairs in the big, bare room, and waited. A crowd of urchins gathered about the door to gaze fixedly at us in silence. They made no remarks whatever, but just gazed and listened. To face a juvenile audience which expresses no opinion at all is an ordeal far worse than that of the new teacher before the silent judgment of the class. We resented these harmless little urchins more strongly than their uncritical intrusion justified.

We had arrived at the posada at about six o'clock, and we felt the slow darkening, and chill cooling, of the evening as we sat there waiting. Nobody but the children paid any attention to us for a long time. Nobody seemed to be there but the patrona in the kitchen, and, as time passed, we could feel the chill of her heart hardening against us. She never appeared, but there seemed to come from the kitchen a deepening accusation that we were "no good."

At last we heard a man's footsteps. He came from the street and entered the kitchen, where there was a rapid, subdued conversation for a few minutes. Then he came out, straight to us, and introduced himself.

He was a rather heavily built, fair, fresh-faced German boy of about twenty-seven, in city clothes that were probably slop-made and were neither old nor new. He looked like a clerk or a shop assistant, a figure not to be expected in Tiurana. In fair English he asked us directly what we were, and what we were doing. He accepted our brief explanation at once, and somehow the talk drifted into French, which he spoke fluently and well. He said that he was lodging at the posada, occupying, so far as he knew, the only spare room. He told us frankly that the patrona had her doubts about us, which he would undertake to dispel. "But," he continued, "it's so unusual for anybody to ask for lodgings in these little places, and the girl of the house has had to go to another house to sleep, to make room for me here. I don't think they can give you a bed, but if you let me do the talking they'll arrange something—I've never failed to get lodgings in a Spanish village myself."

We thanked him, and progress was at a halt for another half-hour, for, having accepted us for what we said we were, the boy displayed no further interest in us and our doings. He proceeded, instead, to make use of us, with that unconscious lack of consideration which marks natural behaviour. Our presence, to him, was an opportunity to exercise his English, and he made the most of it, without remorse. He began to talk about himself, and he talked about himself, in halting English supported by good French, until he had finished.

He was interesting; he was admirable; but we were tired and in a state of uncertainty. Yet, dependent as we were upon his promised assistance, we had to bear with him attentively. He *expected* us to be interested, and expected a good lesson in English. To be truthful, he deserved it.

We had his full story.

He came from what he called ironically "a very patriotic family" in Southern Germany, for he and his brothers had done their utmost to evade military service during the War. He had succeeded completely. When due to be called up for enlistment he made his way to the Swiss frontier, avoiding patrols and frontier guards, and escaped into Switzerland by swimming the Rhine. His account of that swim was exciting, for he was seen from the German bank, an alarm was raised, and the river was swift and cold. He was carried downstream out of sight, and clambered up the Swiss bank safe, shivering, half naked, and gave himself up to the douaniers.

He was at first interned in Switzerland, but was later employed on agricultural work under a Swiss government scheme and was paid wages. I have forgotten the details of the next step, but it is connected, in my mind, with negotiations between Germany and Switzerland for the return of escapees—not of escaped prisoners of war. You, doubtless, will remember it. He was beginning to feel unsafe in Switzerland, where, too, the government scheme of employment for interned foreigners was not working well, so he decided to make his escape absolute.

Eluding escort and other vigilant authorities, he crossed the frontier into France, where he was promptly taken into custody, to be imprisoned among German prisoners of war in a building at le Puy. My memory reconstructs this building as one dedicated to monastic uses in earlier times. It certainly occupied a strong position, and as a prison it bristled with sentries. The boy described it so ably and in such detail that I could have drawn a fair plan of it at the time, so strongly did he insist that we at least feign attention.

But my real attention centred on the patrona, and the faint impression that his crisp tale made upon my mind is already partly effaced.

The building, however, was a place of two-storied wings about courtyards and gardens, on high ground, girt by high walls, beyond which were shrubbery, barbed wire, and on one side a *fossa* and either a moat or a stream beyond it.

Like many pacifists, this boy would risk life for freedom, and he had no intention of remaining a prisoner. He studied corridors, doorways, windows, the disposition of flower boxes against walls, the walls themselves, and what was beyond them. His mind discerned a hazardous chain of dispositions that would mean escape, could he only make good the first link, which was to get out of the top floor dormitory by night. This would depend upon the removal of a lower panel from the door while his fellow prisoners were asleep and the sentry was pacing the corridor outside. With German patience he was able to remove it.

For many nights he scraped and wrenched with a pocket knife, almost noiselessly, working only while the sentry was at the far end of the passage, and ultimately he had the nails removed, the beading loose enough to fall out at a touch, and the panel itself free to be prized from the frame without noise or waste of time. The door showed little sign of his work, and the good fit of the timbers held the pieces in position. He decided to escape the night after this work was finished.

The Germans in that prison were allowed considerable freedom within the building, until bedtime, when they were locked in the dormitories. The night of his escape they had a sing-song, in which the boy took his usual part, playing the violin, and singing, as a last, subtle item :

Morgen muss ich fort von hier,
Jetzt muss ich Abschied nehmen!

It was the only manner, he said, in which he could communicate a farewell to his friends—and to his violin—and they heard it without the slightest suspicion of its aptness. But he was sure they would remember.

When they were all asleep he went barefooted and only partly clad to the door, judged the sentry's distance, and removed the panel.

Then—through the door, through a window which he knew would be open, a light drop on to some boxes, a run across a courtyard, a leap from some other boxes on to the wall, and he threw himself over, the yell of alarm from the sentry in the corridor ringing in his ears!

He rolled down a bank into the barbed wire, blundered over the wire, rushed through the shrubbery, and was swimming the water before shots were fired after him from the wall. They failed to catch him, and he said that he was sure the shots were not really intended to hit him.

He was badly bruised from his fall, and torn by the wire, but the cold water and the exhilaration of freedom quickened him into painless activity, urged him, sped him into the safety of night in lonely places.

He hid in drains and ditches, in clumps of bushes, and by daylight was many miles south of le Puy—and half-naked. Sleeping in holes by day and moving along the hedges and through the woods at night, he begged his way to the Spanish frontier, helped, to his astonishment, and to ours, when he told us, by the French peasants, especially by the women. He made no secret of what he had done; told them he was a German escaped from le Puy, and they, when they heard the story, applauded it with "Bien fait! Ah, bien fait!—Well done!" and gave him food, clothing, and directions.

He trusted them, and safely entered Catalonia, where he had since been able to live, unmolested. But it had been, to our way of thinking, a miserable existence.

At first he had worked in the coal mines (I did not know before, that there are coal mines in Catalonia); then in Barcelona, where the German Consulate rightly declined to give him any assistance, for it could not, after his repudiation of the duty of a subject of the Fatherland in danger. Eventually, he bought a photographic outfit, and was making a living by portraiture in the country villages of Catalonia, where he still wanders, perhaps, an outcast with no claim upon any nation, a man "without papers," paying, in exile, the dear price of a freedom which is no freedom. For where can he go in the world to-day, without papers? What will he do, when Spain inevitably asks for them?

He voiced, nevertheless, an unformulated ambition—perhaps merely for a worthy and secure place in life—and he could find time to study seriously and unaided. His only text-book of English was "*The Pickwick Papers*," his only teacher himself! Traitor is a hard word here, for the boy was so courageous, natural, *good*, and about him there was something heroic.

During the latter part of his tale a man had come in who was evidently the patrón, and after him came a girl; the man seedy, shabby, loose, and middle-aged; the girl a slim sunbeam, young, with long ropes of copper-coloured hair and the milky skin and greyish eyes that so generally accompany red hair. They and the patrona were discussing us while the boy was talking, and we witnessed the slow formation of a decision not to accept us. The three heads would come together, whisper, looking with frank doubt towards us, and then the group would disperse, only to do the same again after a few minutes.

When the boy had finished his story he went over to them and talked rapidly in Catalán. Then the four of them came over to us, and there was a lively, trilingual discussion, evidently intended to solve the riddle—*who* were we? We could not give them any satisfactory answer to that question in Tiurana, and they withdrew.

But while we were talking the girl had been studying us carefully, and you, I think, had stirred some response in her. What an astonishing, poised, and energetic little individual she was for Tiurana! Like a city-bred girl in intelligence, and natural as a wild creature in manner. We both liked her well and at once, and she felt that we liked her. She seemed to raise a voice of authority in the family, albeit a voice that was heeded only after insistence.

The boy came back to announce the family doubt. "What do you think of these people?" they had asked him. "Do you think they're all right?" He had assured them that we were "all right," but they were still discussing it.

Presently they all came back, and the patrón informed us that they had neither a room nor a bed, but that we could sleep in the straw, if that would suit us. At this, the little girl declared for our side, and almost stamped her feet in the vigour of her objection. "*No! No! No en la paja!*—No! You're not going to let them sleep in the straw!" But to little purpose. The patrón had spoken. We exchanged glances with the German boy, and thankfully accepted the straw, asking, at the same time, about dinner. Dinner would be "soon."

It was nearly eight o'clock. The boy left us, and we watched a table being laid; watched the slouching, country lads who gathered in the room to spend the evening drinking coffee and playing cards. The boy came back, looking pinker and smelling of soap, and whispered "It's all right. They're going to arrange about a room." Inwardly we thanked the little girl, who at that moment called him. He went and sat down at the table by himself, and was served with his dinner while we looked on! We were not regular guests, and were to dine with the family, for whom another table was being prepared. Time presses with its whole weight upon the hungry, and we were what you call decidedly "griped" at these interminable delays.

At about nine o'clock we were called to dinner. It was a good meal, eaten in general embarrassment. Behind us were the card players, passing derogatory remarks about us in Catalán (we were sure of that), which the family tried to ignore. Table conversation was limited to very simple questions and answers, with long intervals of silence between them, and, whether through politeness or other reasons which I do not know, the family did not talk among themselves. We liked the strange dish of potatoes mixed with spinach, but when the spouted wine carafe was passed to us we attracted some attention by asking for glasses. Our host was taciturn, our hostess had the air of a woman who wonders if she has done right, and the little girl was subdued.

We were glad when the meal was over, and at once asked to be taken to our room. The patrón led us up several flights of stairs to a room overlooking the side street. There was a double bed in an alcove opposite the window, and none of the belongings of the rightful occupants, clothes, toilet articles, had been removed. The room felt inhabited. In gruff, jerking phrases that were not unfriendly, our host explained very simply "Es la cama de nosotros—It's our own bed," and added, "Please don't go to bed in your boots. The last people we had here did that, and it soils the sheets."

These people, so slow to accept us (or slow to decide that we must tramp on elsewhere—to Pons) had given us their own room, and had themselves to sleep in a neighbouring house! The patrón showed us how to turn out the brass lamp, and told us that there was no need to lock the door "porque no hay malos aquí—for there are no bad characters here," and then, saying good night, went heavily downstairs.

So the world, it seemed, was genuine, after all.

In la cama de nosotros we did not sleep in our boots, and we did not sleep very well, for, although the sheets were clean, there were fleas. How you loathe fleas! I love all creatures great and small, some with a great love, some with a small. Is that not so? And of course you reply "That is not so."

We were woken up in the morning by the patrón, who was groping around the walls of the alcove. He said that he had only come for his Sunday suit, which was hanging on the wall. Then we heard the church bells, quite close. Downstairs, we found ourselves put to shame by the German boy, who had been dressed for hours, had been to the Segre for a swim, had shaved, and had seen all the girls of Tiurana going to early Mass in their best mantillas.

But the freshness of the morning had brought a radiance to more than him. The family, knowing that we had not slept in our boots, was quite cordial. The little girl served us with coffee and bread, and when we paid our bill of nine and a half pesetas there were touching compliments, genuine expressions of confidence and appreciation, uttered by the family and ourselves. We said good-bye quite sure that the posada of Tiurana would welcome us as old friends, should we ever go there again.

The road of to-day was like the road of yesterday, a road over dry, sandy hills that hid the distance; a road through shrubby, dull green vegetation—bushes rather than trees, a light covering to the land rather than woods, that hid the nearer distance. We talked, for a while, of the family at the posada, and of the German boy. Doubt us as they did yesterday, they had asked for no proof of our word, no production of our papers, and there had been no talk of money between us until the time came to pay their reasonable bill. The boy told us that a circus troupe of questionable character was expected in Tiurana, and they thought, at first, that we must be part of it.

As for the boy, in spite of his charm, in spite of the interest we found in him, and even in spite of his service to us, he had been trying. For he so frankly *used* the opportunity we represented, and was so blind to the possibility that we might be a little too tired, too agacés, to place ourselves at his disposal.

You thought you detected about him something which I, long before, had told you was common to many of his race. It is dangerous to sum up the character of a whole foreign people in a phrase; moreover, it is unjustifiable. Perhaps what I meant, and what you thought you detected in him, is best and least critically expressed as a belief that the peoples of inner and outer Europe are not destined ever to appreciate each other warmly, for each does as a matter of course things the other would not dream of doing.

Even during the War I respected the German mind and character deeply, but I am not gifted with the power to understand Germans, nor can I feel any warmth of friendship towards them as a people. Names of other nations also bring this darkness of understanding down upon my mind—French, American, English, Russian. Yet, I am partly French myself (very much so in mentality, I am told), and I have met captivating persons, made close friends, among all these incomprehensible peoples. Towards Italians, Spaniards, Danes, Scots, and Irishmen in the mass, I feel pleasantly warm, though I have few friends among them.

Attractions and repulsions of this kind are not founded upon reason, knowledge, or education, though experience may modify them somewhat. They are an instinctive response of the feelings, and so, not meant to be understood. I am not talking academically, nor like an untravelled Australian or American who holds theories of racial inferiority, though he know nothing about foreign peoples. I am a person who has travelled widely and lived in foreign lands, liking some and disliking others, and confessing that I do not really know why. Saying that I do not know why Britishers should dislike Germans, to be more precise.

As we walked over the road that morning, I thought deeply of things the German boy had brought into my mind with a most startling vividness. For the day, that day, is one which is assuming the solemnity of an almost religious observance in Australasia. It was the 25th of April, Anzac Day. The anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli in 1915. It is a day of double significance for me, because the brigade that was the first to land at Gaba Tepe was the parent of my own brigade, which, in its turn, participated in the counter-attack at Villers-Bretonneux on the 25th of April 1918, an action that finally halted the German advance on Amiens. I was neither at Gallipoli nor at Villers-Bretonneux myself, but the spirit of the brigade is alive in me, and, on that morning, when chance had led me to encounter a German escapee in a remote Catalonian village, I felt the magnitude of a past which made you a foreigner—one to whom the day, the associations, the German boy, meant nothing. Oh, it might have been a story, an enthralling story, that I could have told you, but I did not want your mere *interest* in it. I wanted the response that comes from *knowledge of its meaning*, and that locked you out, as it excludes everyone who did not live in that story. So, for a while, I walked by myself, even as we talked.

The gradual approach of the river drew me slowly outward, into the companionship of a coeval sun shining on a real world where we were together, and we gave the attention of our eyes to river life. We were beside the river, descending slowly to its level. At one place was another punt like that of yesterday, but we were not close enough to observe its mechanism. When at last we were down alongside the river, floating logs of pine and poplar became numerous, and presently we heard the roar of waters rushing over a weir.

The level of the river was about twenty feet lower, under the weir, which had dammed back a great number of logs. Beside the road was a flume, and beyond the flume a spillway or chute. A gang of men was working with poles on the weir and along the riverbank above it, manipulating the long, slender logs into the line of a strong current which swept them into and over the spillway, whence they drifted off singly down the river. We crossed the flume and stood beside the spillway for nearly half an hour, I think, excited as youngsters to watch the swift, smooth slither of water in the chute; the precipitate slide of log after log caught helplessly in the grip of the water; to listen to the strong, steady, torrent-sound of the pouring weir, rough and even as its own masonry; to ask each other how we would like to be shot over the spillway, head first, feet first, or in a canoe; to shout uselessly, "Here comes another!" as each log appeared, and to hold our breath as it sped past shot the incline, and disappeared under the back-surging protest of angry water at the bottom, only to bob up lazily and awry downstream, floating quietly off! Rush and roar and velocity are the most exhilarating things. They tempt, and some of us, like you, can yield at once. Others, like me, are overcome in time. Sooner or later, we are all ready to dare. So what about that canoe some day? We wanted it at Cahors, you remember.

The flume ran beside the road to a small, tidy generating station, one of those mysterious, modern things that seem to be unattended. We assumed that it produced electric current for Pons, and the next few minutes of walking brought us suddenly into Pons, a town of considerable size, though of undistinguished appearance. An open, low, dusty town.

At a shop on a corner we bought quite a good lunch of bread, sardines, tomatoes, quince conserve, a savoury, soapy cheese, and yellow wine. Boys and youths in the shop, loungers in rough working clothes, were masters of unaffected courtesy when we wanted some information about the road ahead. The spokesman stood up to reply, and said *Señor*, instead of the familiar *hombre*, and his statements were brief and clear. We noted Pons as a good, plain town, and left it.

On the west of the town the road dipped into a shallow, dry depression, the bed of the Rio Llobregós, beyond which it turned southward, away from the Segre, to climb low, dusty hills. The place was very open, and we looked around us for a shady picnic spot. In a shallow fold of the rising ground, between the road and the Segre, there was a small olive grove, terraced in broad, low steps, with vines growing between the trees, and stone walls and a bank of green grass beyond. Here and there was a poppy. We carried our lunch to the far side and ate it slowly, sitting in comfort, using flat stones, like so many little tables, for the sardine tin, the tomato tin, the cheese.

The day was warm, tranquil, and the whole world lay in silence. A rich fullness of the light was like the quiet vibrancy of 'cello tones, and life seemed to caress the green bank, to fill the solitude, as if, were one to part the live grass, the ground would reveal a multitude of tiny living things, a teeming of vitality at rest, a motionless teeming of infinite wakefulness, a gladness of contemplation without thought, a permeation of contentment through everything. The very stones were glad to be warm. The short shadows barely moved, and warmth filtered through the stillness into things in the shade. Motion, the stirring from a place, the utterance of sounds, were impossible, and we remained there to pass delightful, drowsy hours, forgetful of all wisdom but the wisdom of feeling, and feeling the same thing—feeling part of the same thing; part of the simple gladness that floods earth and plant and animal being, when the world lies still and the air is still with the stillness of a fluid ready to precipitate into crystallisation at the first tremor.

A cart passed up the road—or down the road—within sight of us, the axle creaking indolently, the mule stepping like an afterthought, the man staring at us, beyond us, or at nothing. A transit of suspended reverie. The whole globe wheeling in stillness.

Or how or why we came eventually to move; with what glances or words we assented; in what manner the neat packs were shouldered; why, indeed, we are not still sitting in that place, where for once we were perfectly satisfied, I do not know. But we were, at length, moving along the road again, southward, over dusty low hills, further and further from the Segre, which turns at Pons to flow to the west. It was mid-afternoon.

(*b*) *The Lowland*

The town of Pons is an expression of the land, for it lies on the fringe of the low, lightly wooded sierras of the north; or on the fringe of the broad, open lowlands to the south-west, according to the eye's own choice. It is the place where the Segre turns to enter a narrow valley in the rocky hills, to flow through rough sandstone gorges for many secret miles. Above Pons the land is green; below, it is yellow brown, an undulating country of gardening-farmers, who lead the river waters in tortuous canals around their hills and on to their dry fields, to irrigate crops of wheat, barley, potatoes, peanuts, green vegetables, and groves of olives.

We walked now along a gently rolling road between poor crops, among stunted trees, wondering how the waters for irrigation could be led to such places. A long, lonely, winding road. Tosal, to the north, was hidden in the rocky hills that imprisoned the river.

Oliola, to the south, was hidden in a broad fold of the dusty farmland, but we passed the turnoff which leads to it, and were convinced that it must exist.

Time did not stride, but floated, like a bright cloud, until we found ourselves winding down, as from a high place, into a broad valley, that of the Segre once again. There were bands of green wheat through the lined olive groves, and, like a thing misplaced, came the Canal de Urgél, shaded by poplars, winding unnaturally around the curves of the hills, like a roadway of water.

This narrow, placid canal, which obviously never bore a barge, leaves the Segre between Pons and Tosal, and is led through the stone hills to turn eventually southward, where it skirts the contour of the rolling land to the east for many miles, and sends westward many branches to water the lower land. The canal itself turns ultimately westward near Borjas Blancas, where it forks, and is led in two branches back to the Segre, below Lérida.

Our road crossed the canal on a bridge too low for the clearance of a boat or a barge, and our descent became steeper. There were people in unusual numbers ahead of us, well-dressed boys and girls out strolling in the bright Sunday afternoon or sitting on banks by the roadside, sitting under trees in the fields. They were lively in manner but they offered neither greetings nor curiosity of gaze, and we passed them by in silence, to enter the large, dingy town that had released them.

Artesa de Segre is like an angular thing that has accidentally caught the thread of the main road—entangled it. I remember the place chiefly on account of its flimsy, iron café tables and chairs on the footpaths, its ugly iron railings on the balconies of its low façades, and for its corners.

To enter this town we had to go north-west, and to leave it we went almost south-east, so deep is the loop of the road, so like a river-meander.

Notwithstanding the drab unattractiveness of the place, or perhaps on account of it, we paused there and tested the humour of the inhabitants. There were cigarettes to be bought, and the amorphous old lady in the tobacconist's shop asked us the time, as a pretext for opening a more personal conversation. "What? All the way from Paris?" she exclaimed, like one who is told of a miracle by an eye-witness. "What are you?" she continued, "Excursionistas?" We said "Yes," and noted the word as one that would probably be useful. Further down the street we reassured a member of the Guardia civil who was observing us, by asking him if there were a fonda at Cubélls. He said there was one, and continued to observe us, but we reassured him doubly by sitting down at a café where we drank our coffee slowly, like men of wealth and leisure in evident disguise.

On a building opposite the café was the sign *Clinica veterinaria,* which not only reminded us that we had seen similar signs elsewhere—at Pons, and Orgañá, I think—but stood, for me, as a reminder that we had been looking only at the surface of life in France and Spain. What is a Spanish veterinary clinic like inside? We were never to know. Is the local veterinary surgeon "received" by the local doctor and schoolmaster? What is the status of the commander of the Guardia civil? Are there nobility and gentry in these little towns? If so, what is the round of their days: what their intimate life; their powers, philosophies, opinions, habits? About these and a thousand other things we might have asked, but we did not want to ask. For it is unnecessary to dissect a beetle in order to know that it is different from a butterfly, and the surface of Spain revealed the spirit of Spain, because we saw it as a living surface. The sign made me think, too, of the innocence of life in these remote places, for I could not help comparing it with another sign I had seen in more than one part of the distant city of Habana —*Clinica venerea!*

Meditations and coffee are exhaustible. Moving again, we were somewhat confused by the angles of Artesa de Segre, but our road-sense led us correctly. On the edge of the town a youth asked us what we were, so we said "Excursionistas." The answer satisfied him completely.

We climbed from the valley, where the grass was brown and dry, crossed the Canal de Urgél again, and, where the highroad from Tarragona comes in from the south, we turned into our proper direction of march once more, over the dusty hills. In half an hour the Canal de Urgél again approached us, this time to disappear into an arched, stone tunnel which it nearly filled, and through which it flows to emerge some five kilometres further south, on the other side of the flat bulge which the map here calls a sierra.

There were a few trees along the road now, and we chewed the dust of a succession of automobiles. Away to the right, on the slope of the hills, lay Foradada, a scattered village of low, mud buildings, brown, and unlike any we had seen before. It remained in sight for a long time, backed by the rocky Sierra Carbonera, in which the Segre was again sequestrated like a thing of the wilderness. The name of this flat sierra denotes charcoal-burning, which may have taken place there in a wild antiquity when there was something to burn—when slow travellers were using the old road of the Valira. Our road, however, slid away from it into the pulverent farmlands, and we lost, gradually, all awareness of the soil, the hills, the solid earth, for we were marching to the sinking sun.

The western sky was heavily banded with smoke-dark clouds, level bars, like a rhythmic precipitation from the colloidal fluid of the heavens, a slow, infinitely slow settling to earth of a light burden carried by the warm, solvent day. Thick slabs of sunlight, pressing between the bars of cloud, were levered into ever steepening obliquity by the down-dragging sun, their weightless volume impinging on the imponderable mass of the cloudbars with a stress that moved nothing. A conflict without sound or turmoil was resolving itself in a parturient splendour and crescendo of colour, which inflamed the edges and flushed across the breadth of the banded clouds like an excitement from their own innermost, secret substance. A dull blazing of murky colour swelled and intensified into streaks and bars of yellow and mauve-pink, thick and ponderous, yet insubstantial as rich chords of music and real as though it had been a revelation of art.

I had not forgotten the day, the meaning of the day, the vivid sense of living that had marked the day, and the day itself had known—was dying in its proper exultation.

We, who were looking at a picture, expected no more than the culmination of its incandescence would bring. But a turn of the road transformed splendour into magnificence.

Before us, in the open distance, rose Cubélls, a dark mass of mystical roofs and towers on a great, lone hill. The black silhouette, sharp and grand, stood like a feudal thing against the rich, banded blaze of the sky, its very immobility suggesting an impermanence, a vortical aspiration towards the coming night, a readiness to twirl upward like a waterspout into black heaven when the darkness fell, to be seen no more by human eyes. Thus are the real and the unreal intertwined in our perceptions.

For an hour this picture was darkening in front of us, deepening slowly into smoke-dark cloud and cold extinction, as we approached Cubélls. But we had seen the glory at its moment of greatest glory. And it was our only vivid sunset of the journey—sunset, the peerless decoration of the days, in warm, dry lands, where the dust of dust hangs ever in the air.

We rested, in the falling night, where the road crosses a small ravine. Almost above us hung Cubélls, a towering thing on its great mound. On the flank of the mound a few children watched the goats late-browsing.

Where would the fonda be? On the top of a rise we became aware that the road did not enter Cubélls at all, but passed it by on much lower ground. We met boys and girls, all in their Sunday clothes, walking abreast with linked arms in fours and fives. These were sentimental groups, talking gaily, some singing, and the ones we stopped seemed a little embarrassed. A coy silence overcame the group, but they answered our questions politely, and indicated a white building down the road as the fonda.

When we knocked at the door it was opened by a plump young woman with a baby in her arms. The dog who escorted her looked upon us with marked disfavour, and the woman herself shook her head and assured us in quiet, nervous tones that she had no room at all. We asked her if there were another fonda, and she seemed to point to a farmhouse across the road, and then closed the door on us.

We went to the house across the road where we met a wiry old woman with two dogs in the courtyard. The dogs rushed at us, barking, and had to be called off, and when we had explained our business the old woman herself launched an attack of abuse. Fonda? Of course it wasn't a fonda! And whatever gave us such an idea? If we wanted accommodation, why didn't we go up to the posada in the pueblo, where we would get it? We withdrew, quickly, very glad that it wasn't a fonda, but we vented curses and complaints. "Why," said one of us, "this is getting as bad as France!"

Up into Cubélls, the pueblo, we climbed, by a steep, narrow, spiral street between tall houses. The posada was easily found, and was full of goodly company and appetising smells. The landlord, a well-fed, middle-aged man of pleasant manner, said that he had not a vacant bed. We explained the situation to him and he listened with some concern, telling us finally that if we went to the alcalde—the mayor—a bed might be found for us in one of the houses, but that the most the posada could provide would be comida—dinner—should we then need it.

We found the alcalde in a rank stable up a steep side street, a man of the farms among his wheels and straw by lantern light. He was a prosperous, bucolic person in shirtsleeves, and he heard us with expressionless gravity and patience, as if he were leaning on his staff of office instead of on a rake. He wasted no time when we had spoken.

"Did you offer to pay them in advance at the fonda?"

"No."

"Ah! That's the trouble. They're afraid you'll leave without paying the bill. Some people from the roads do that. No—it's no use going back there now, and there's no room at the posada." At that he called a bent old man with a stick who was standing in the street, gave him some instructions in rapid Catalán, then, turning to us, said laconically:

"Go with him."

The old man, whom we called the "town crier," led us to a house, and, telling us to wait, went inside. After a few minutes he came out, to lead us to another house. On the way he spoke to a portly man who was coming down a side street, and the portly man exploded with such indignation, and looked at us with such scorn, that we knew exactly what had been said, before the old town crier told us, in rather simple translation, "He says 'No.' " We were taken to two more houses, where they also said "No!" The old man then said that they had not a spare bed at the first house, but would allow us to sleep in the straw there, and would give us dinner. We agreed to this at once, and were led back.

The old man entered as before, and returned to say that the owner of the house was coming down to us and that he himself would now leave us. We had to press this old person to accept a peseta as a reward for his trouble, and he shuffled off more than pleased with us.

Our host descended, and led us through a doorway, of which the heavy wooden door was strong enough to withstand a siege-attack, into the stable. The hard earth floor sloped inward so steeply and irregularly that it must have been the natural surface of the covered hillside. We were taken up two flights of stairs, each barred at the head by a massive door, into the dwelling rooms on the second storey. The house was very bare, very clean, and we were asked to sit on a bench in a small room where there were several men and a group of young children.

Everybody accepted us, and our host, a tall, spare man of sober appearance, resumed a conversation with the other men. They asked us a few questions, out of formal courtesy, but for the most part, and without impoliteness, they left us alone.

We watched the children, of whom one, a tiny girl, was dancing to a tune she hummed, as if a quiet fountain bubbled within her from some source deeper than consciousness. You, I remember, seemed little interested in her, but I felt that I was watching a small vessel chosen by destiny to overflow in rhythmic expression; that here, perhaps, was a future primera bailarina of Spain, so unconsciously eloquent was the train of her impelled movements, and so inevitable her obedience to the pulse of their emotional source. Yet nobody seemed to notice the child, nor did she dance for anybody but herself.

It was late when we arrived, about eight o'clock, and after perhaps half an hour the men, except our host, rose to go downstairs and out, taking several of the children with them. We were left with the family and were soon taken to another room where we sat down to dinner.

The señora remained in the kitchen, and her elder daughter, a girl of about fourteen, acted as waitress. The host, a growing boy, two smaller boys, the little girl, and ourselves constituted the dinner party. These people were plain, almost unlovely in their appearance, and somewhat slovenly dressed. The señora, had her eyes been less brightly alert, would have been a colourless figure, and the children stirred no tenderness, no desire to play nor amuse. The host alone was remarkable. A man with a lined, preoccupied face and light eyes, a face never relieved by a smile; sallow, perhaps ill; certainly a man who needed to be serious. But a most hospitable man.

There is, about very simple people who know the weight of life, a refinement and dignity that are of greater worth than the manners of good breeding. A singular purity exists among truly simple country people, where no turbidity of education has made thinking a process rather than a phenomenon; where relaxation from the task of living is never longer than a pause for rest—never long enough for dullness or boredom. Such people, under the serious weight of life, yet neither crushed nor brutalised by it, know instinctively the precise values of all the natural, necessary, human relations. To such people our family of Cubélls belonged.

Confidence reigned in this house. The children were under no restraint but were quiet and natural. The youngest boy made a sign for the wine carafe. It was passed to him silently, he manipulated it perfectly, drank as much as he wanted, and put it down, without any attention being paid to him. A boy of no more than five! The only words resembling an order during the meal were when our host asked the girl to bring us glasses for our wine. The only approach to an argument was our own protest when we were given an unnecessary number of clean plates, in obvious contrast with family usage.

The simple and excellent dinner of soup, broad beans, stewed chicken, omelette, and salad, was served with the smooth despatch that is so difficult to attain, even with a trained domestic staff and a trained family, among more sophisticated people. Yet here, the floor was bare, the walls unadorned, the plain wooden table was without a cloth, the china was coarse, the knives (although they were sharp, and from Toledo) were few and plain, and we sat on benches.

During the meal the children talked among themselves and our host conversed with us, waving a very long knife to emphasise each remark. I had to dodge that knife more than once, as it literally "thrust the point home," but the host was quite unconscious of his gestures. We asked him why he had taken us under his roof. He paused, and then said very solemnly "Yo respeto a la gente," as a beginning of the explanation. It is rather difficult to translate it as he meant it, but "I believe in hospitality" conveys the spirit of the phrase. He went on to say that he himself had spent three years wandering from village to village, and had learnt then what difficulties beset unknown travellers. In every village and small town, he said, there ought to be a man conversant with several languages, so that foreigners might be received with understanding instead of hostility. Then, turning to you, he asked, "But, if you come from America, why is it that you don't speak Spanish?" Thus we learnt that in Spain *América* means *South* America, and that the United States and Canada are hardly associated with the name at all, being mentioned separately, in most cases, or, if it be necessary to refer to the whole continent, the name of *Norte América* is used. Until the matter was explained from both sides he was puzzled that Spanish was obviously not your mother tongue. He said that there were many people from Cubélls in America—"Hay mucha gente de este pueblo en América—en Buenos Aires." We had enjoyed the delicate, white bread of Cubélls, and said so. "Yes," he agreed, "but in ———" (I forget the name) "they make *un pan exquisito* —delicious bread." A most intelligent man of natural culture, this entertaining yet serious host.

Soon after dinner he took us down to the stable and showed us the partitioned feed-room where we were to sleep. The straw was clean, he said, and we might use those horse-rugs there, as covering. We would understand that he had no better accommodation to offer. He then bade us good night, and bolted behind him the great street door and the door at the head of the stairs.

The place had a heavy, animal smell that was not unpleasant, and we could hear the animals themselves in the deeper part of the stable. The straw seemed clean. We arranged our sleeping places and then looked for the switch to turn off the electric light, but could not find it. I pounded on the door at the head of the stairs but our host was by then on a still higher floor, perhaps behind another bolted door, and there was no response.

We slept with the light burning, and in the horse-rugs, as in la cama de nosotros, there were fleas. Didn't you love them! And, quite apart from hygienic indignation, I think your violent release of feelings is right. It is better to be able to let annoyance and exasperation escape, than to hold them sourly under pressure. I like your sharp contrasts of light and shade; your expletive spring to a sitting posture to express "flea," and your profound subsidence into assuagement on the exorcism of flea—I like them better than my own smouldering half-lights, my impatient and continued scratching for flea. But we passed a far more comfortable night at Cubélls than in the rick at Charmont, fleas or no fleas! And besides, fleas have a right to be in horse-rugs.

Our host came down early in the morning to unlock the stout doors that imprisoned us, and to find the light burning, which he said was of no consequence. He took us upstairs, where there was nobody about but the younger children, and we sat down to our breakfast of bread and coffee with goat's milk. He broke and munched chocolate while he talked to us (the family had evidently breakfasted much earlier), and told us about the country—that there were four provinces* in Catalonia—Tarragona, Barcelona, Gerona, and Lérida, as we already knew. He seemed very interested in the electrification of Catalonia, and referred to an accident on the electric railway near Barcelona, in which some scores of people were killed, as if it were news from that morning's paper. "No," he said, when we asked him, "it was a long time ago—months ago." But how the catastrophe had remained vivid in his mind, as if he thought life too precious to risk such dangers! An almost universal delusion, that of the preciousness of life, so recently proved a false belief, and the proof not only forgotten, but never recognised, even at the time!

After breakfast we were asked if we would like to wash, and were taken out on to a very high balcony where basins of water, and towels, had been placed in readiness for us. In answer to my question our host said that Cubélls, on its high hill, depended solely upon rain water!

The morning was cold, fresh, and hazy, but the view from the balcony was a superbly empty sweep of russet lowland. The tall house on its hillside felt like a sheer cliff. At its foot were tiny patches of green, separated by high stone walls, each a little yard, a miniature pasture, on which rabbits were browsing. At a bend on the spiral street our host's two youngest boys were struggling with the family goat, taking it out to pasture. In the middle distance to the south was the low roll of the Sierra de Almenara, so regularly notched by shallow, dry stream-beds, all the same distance apart, that its crest was a scalloped line of exquisite precision. The whole landscape seemed bare, until the eyes became adjusted to the apparent monotony of colour, when there emerged from the soil-tint an overlying smokiness, a mist of far-spread olive groves. They, said our host, were the staple support of the town—of the region.

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*The provinces are the significant subdivisions of Spain. They are larger than French departments or English counties and are grouped into still larger units, such as Catalonia, Aragon, New Castile, etc., which are each under a Governor. I can find no suitable name for these larger units, and shall refer to them as "states."

This, then, this expanse to the south-west, was the vast pan of the Catalonian lowland, the Llanos de Urgél and la Noguera, as the same plains are respectively called on the east and west banks of the Segre! This, I would like to think, is "the Catalaunian plain" where Attila, long ago, was for once defeated. But there is another plain far from the province of Lérida, and not even in Spain, with better title to the honour. But it was vast, seen from this dominating place. On clear mornings, said our host, the sea is visible, in the direction of Tarragona. No wonder that Cubélls produced a painter of renown!

Time was passing, and it was half-past nine when we put on our packs to go. With some embarrassment we asked for our bill, and were told that it was five pesetas—relatively the smallest sum we were to pay for a night's board and lodging over the whole journey!

Not only did our host escort us to the street. He accompanied us, by a track we would not have found ourselves, along the crest of the low spur that stretches south from the hill, to a point close to the highroad. There, where we could make no mistake, he said good-bye, gravely and simply.

As we went down the road I had a feeling that I was resuming a journey interrupted long, long before—how long before I could not tell. We were childishly happy that morning, like people who have been flattered, and the spirit of work starting—the knowledge that men on the road were going out from the town to work hard in the fields; that the animals being driven towards us were bringing commodities into the town to start the day's business—was like lifting dew, the fresh clearing of things that is the prelude of energy. "Why!" you exclaimed, "Think of it! We've been accepted into a Spanish family! When has such a thing happened to us before?" Horse-rugs, fleas, uneasy sleep, the fondas, were all forgotten. It is good to start the day in wonder.

The country of that morning, seen at close range, was not very interesting. Our first halt was at a gritty place where some old terracing had been so neatly done as to deceive me at first into the belief that it was the natural stratification of an outcrop of yellow sandstone. Further on, the pruning of the olive trees was in full swing, the men working on ladders, the twigs being carefully collected, bundled, loaded on to asses, and carried off, like the prunings of a vineyard. Then, here a little wheat, there an irrigation ditch; increasing flatness and dustiness, bare earth; and long, uninterrupted, uninteresting views.

For half an hour we could see motor lorries hastening over a straight, flat road to the south, the road from Balaguer to Vilagrasa. A power line, doubtless from the Noguera Pallaresa valley, crossed our road and ran on, over to southern hills, bound probably for Tarragona. Then came flat river-land, men tilling it with spades, and through it, winding in sluggish marshes where there were bullrushes, reeds, little darting brown birds, and frogs, ran the Rio Sío. The low bridge seemed to sag between the neat, unplanted flats, a thing limp in the steaming marsh-smells of a hot morning.

On the far side we turned west along the foot of a range of hillocks, taking a poor, dirt road towards Balaguer, for the main road passes the town at a distance. There came towards us a gipsy family, five or six people with a donkey, an unromantic group of unkempt, unbrilliant beings. One young woman released herself from the group like an arrow, sped towards us and pestered us for a few minutes, while the others proceeded, glowering.

Balaguer came in sight, a coldly brown mass, harmoniously beautiful, a notched ridge behind it bearing a church with a great tower, to the north, and a low fortress, to the south of the notch. Bare as the land, they rose properly from it, over the dull green of watered plantations that spread before the town.

In the green, shady gardens we rested, you overcome with a sudden indisposition that we could not understand. The grasses were lush, and water flowed obscurely everywhere, in deep ditches, in covered ditches under the road, and in an old conduit on pillars in the field across the road from us. We were among trees, crops, vegetables, with coolness seeping around us, and the town at hand. After a while you felt better and we moved.

East of the Segre the "town" is a kind of faubourg, a place where there are olive oil refineries, flour mills, a hidden railway station. Hotel autobuses were coming from the station, the smartest of them marked *Gran Hotel España.*

I had expected the Segre to be a much larger river here than at Pons, where we had seen it last, for it is joined by the Noguera Pallaresa, another stream from the mountains, where it breaks through the rocky little sierras about ten miles north of Balaguer; but, when we came upon it, it seemed smaller.

A strong bridge of yellow stone led across, from high clay bank to high clay bank, into the real town, which extended its arcaded front southward along the far bank. Down by the water women were washing clothes, beating them on flat stones with wooden pats. At the bridge-head men were lounging. As we crossed, all eyes were upon us, and we walked a little defiantly, and turned without hesitation as if we knew the place well, into the arcade. Balaguer was not our destination for the day, and we intended only to buy lunch and go on elsewhere. But Balaguer was easier to look upon than to enter.

Under the arcade was a long succession of woodworkers' and ironworkers' shops, of which the backs were doubtless "in town," but their fronts were fused into the continuity of an unfissured glaze. We walked the whole length of the town front under the arcade, until, at the end, it forked into a promenade along the river bank, and a furtive alley which gave us dark entry into the town.

In a street that must run behind the arcade we were attracted by the sombreness of a wine shop, where, for a penny each, we drank a measure of inky, palatable wine, cool and acidulous. Then to a bakery. Thence to a grocery store that was encumbered within by massive piles of bags containing the dry things that are scooped and poured—in pellet, grain, flake and powder. We believe, on reasonable impressions less than evidence, that we were overcharged there. Out, to the street. Then, by the same alley by which we entered, we emerged from the shady confinement of the town into the open brightness of the river-front. Oranges were bought at the only shop under the arcade that was not a workshop, and we retraced our way to the faubourg opposite.

A woman indicated a footpath along the river, to Vallfogona. It led between mud walls to green fields, and very soon we both responded to the same unspoken idea—that lunch, hereabouts, would be pleasant. Like a pair of horses driven by the same reins we turned aside, crossed ditches and muddy places, and made a way through long grass to an opening in a lush grove, a tropically rank place.

It was a good lunch, eaten in a matter-of-fact mood, but the insidious languor of that place, its torrid exuberance of soft growth, its moist inflation of disinvigorated vitality, were distasteful to our energetically braced condition, to our eagerness for motion, activity, alertness. We found ourselves moving, going, walking soon over dry garden-fields to the footpath.

But, the day—so sunny! The river—so near! People should do more than walk, on such days. We looked at each other like two persons whose feelings are urging them towards co-operation in sin. "Why not . . . why not go—down to the river—swim—wash our clothes—bask in the sun and—go back to Balaguer for the night?" I do not remember who said it, nor even that it was said, but, there we were, crossing a dry field where a young crop of an unknown plant was growing. Oh, but we discussed that plant—how it was like parsley, or young carrots—as if we were tramping honestly along the road to Lérida; but, we went through brambles, down to the water, and there, on a big, flat rock, our packs and our clothes fell from us!

Two nude gentlemen—when nude we looked like gentlemen but when clad we did not, on this journey—fell to laundry work within full but suitably distant view of Balaguer. Other than the mass of the town half a mile upstream, there were no buildings in sight, and the banks, six or eight feet high, were lined with brambles, shrubs, and trees. It was an open seclusion. The surface of the big, flat rock was only a few inches above the water, and we bent over to our task of washing everything—socks, handkerchiefs, underwear, heavy khaki shirts—beating the wet clothes with flat stones, like the women with their wooden pats under the bridge. In half an hour our whole wardrobe, except our trousers and caps, was spread over the bushes to dry.

Half-way through our laundry work you made a remarkable discovery—the level of the water was *falling*, slowly, steadily.

There was nothing in sight to suggest why it should do so, and we watched it with astonishment, falling by slow centimetres, the edges of our flat rock affording good gauge-marks. We could see no reason for it at all. I reviewed all my knowledge of rivers. Tide? No. Variations in volume due to intermittent showers of rain, or to the irregular melting of the snows in the mountains, hours ago, yesterday? Possibly. But the water was *falling*, from a level that had been maintained for some time, to judge from the banks, the ripple marks on sand and mud, the light, stranded flotsam. Was this the hour for opening the sluice gates to admit water into the canals upstream? Perhaps. But if so, the canals, in order to produce this change in the river, must have been quite empty before they were opened. Simply, *we did not know* why it was happening, and must remain puzzled.

Tingling with the warmth of the sun, we plunged into the river to tingle with sudden coldness. The current was very strong, making it difficult to prevent being swept downstream even in slack water, and a few minutes called for unusual exertion. We soaped and splashed vigorously in the shallow, and noticed, as we were doing so (or rather, you noticed, and called my attention to it) that three or four men had appeared half a mile downstream. They were naked as ourselves, and seemed to be drawing a seine-net in broad shallows.

The air was so warm and dry that our clothes were dry as soon as we were, but the soaking warmth of sunlight, the feeling of untrammelled cleanness, the fresh touch of wind on the skin, the rare pleasure of being naked in the sun, kept us from dressing, and we folded all our spare clothes and arranged our packs before we thought of dressing ourselves. If I remember rightly, there was a nail-paring ceremony on that rock, too.

Meanwhile, we noticed that the water was rising again, and that the men downstream had stopped seining. You connected the two facts, surmised that this fluctuation of level was a common occurrence and that the men dragged the net at low water. We watched the rock, and saw the water rise gently to its original level, where it stayed—while we were there. In less than three hours it had fallen and risen quite a foot, For the width, depth, and velocity of the Segre at this point, such a change in volume was enormous, and I can find no explanation for it. I suspect that it is in some way related to the control of irrigation. But we rather like mysteries. Things that start wonder and speculation, so long as they remain mysteries, remain interesting. Explain them and they die. Botany takes the soul out of flowers—until we discover that it really explains nothing.

The short distance into Balaguer was not sufficient to "walk off" that warm prickliness which is the constraint of clothes on bodies that have been bare long enough to resent the stuffy suffocation. I was still twitching when we got inside the cool town. We wanted an hotel, and remembered the Gran Hotel España of the smart bus. Surely, we could afford it? Money was lasting better than we had expected. In the cobbled square were small motor buses from everywhere within a radius of twenty miles or so, and on the north side of the square was the hotel, new, large, but plain and comfortable.

Gladsome and stalwart maids, who will become good-tempered, fat women, deposited us with solicitude in a tiny white room which the two small iron bedsteads nearly filled. The same maids arranged us for shaving and the concomitant ablutions, in a large, Franco-American bathroom. There was a bed in that bathroom, ready for occupation—most un-American; mystifying. Or was it? You were in there after me, and you're American.

Out—to explore Balaguer, to be effected most easily, we thought, by sitting in a high place, whence we could look down upon it, into it. The square showed signs of prosperity, in active building operations, and there was a shiny, new café in one corner. We chose a narrow street leading steeply uphill towards the ridge, the fortress, the church; and half-way up, we bought glossy black cherries and golden loquats from an affable old woman in black who was squatting, with spread knees and a lap, in front of her shop. We called the fruit estos and esos—these and those, but she said that they were cerezas and—I can't remember the other word. Loquat is not in Appleton's dictionary.

We sat under the walls of the church, a plain, massive thing, the tower octagonal and crowned with a flat pyramid of tiles. Brown, yellow brown, the church and the fortress, like our flat rock by the river. Sandstone—the foundation of the lowland clay. Balaguer, in the shade, from above, was unexpectedly colourful and lively, the streets just beginning to fill for the paséo. Gay dresses, bright in shadow, pure and clean against the dull, aged walls, like flowers resting on mud. Slow-swarming movement within the channels of the stationary mass of the town. Contending ridge and ripple of brown tile; uppermost stories all open, lacking the back walls, like so many pigeon holes. Orderly perspective skeleton of edge and angle, one-sided, opaque. Hanging line and floating line, sharp, fragile. Black ice of window plaques, brittle, unreflecting. A town in the shade.

The view beyond the town fused all the dingy variety of thick, lowland colour into a dimly blotched, brown sea, calm, hazy, from which the town dragged on to a green shore a net of road-thread and railway-thread, filamentously definite in proximity, vanishing in outward radiation to soft submergence in the dun shallow. We knew that out there were red rock and yellow rock; brown clay and grey land; crop of pale and tree of sombre green, and groves of silver smokiness: but from here all merged into a matte hue of treaty. Here was no scene of verdure, no profusion. Here was a laborious yielding of the land to governed waters; its perennial blossom a stark, yellow town. A beauty there is that is not loveliness, and what is music to the soul need bear no joy nor sweetness . . . they swarm in the town—paséo. There is radiance in the land, for its life is clotted into towns that minutely swarm within.

The door of the church tower creaked. It was the old bell-ringer, mounting slowly to toll the Angelus. A bodiless, cold note that seemed to call a loud chill down upon the shadows.

We went slowly down to the town.

There was no melancholy within walls, where, at the hotel, we waited long for dinner. Wicker chairs in a vestibule were all soon occupied. A boy and a girl on a wicker lounge expressed profound feelings of regard for each other, unabashed, heedless of wider possibilities of erotic resonance, but nobody gave more than mild attention to them, except ourselves.

Dinner, in the bare, spacious dining room, was good—the familiar meal of soup, chicken, salad, omelette, conserve—and the comely girl served it with real personal interest in us, until I failed, through preoccupation, to give a response that was expected. After that she merely did her work. A trifle of neglect—a trifling occasion; yet a stiffening of willing service into perfunctory duty: a little dinner party, however vague its intimacy, transformed into a purchased meal. Those who serve and those who are served are equals, in Spain, on the ground of equal courtesy.

We went out to the new café for coffee, and found it a commendably plain and comfortable place. The only other occupants were six or seven young fellows thoroughly enjoying a brisk but earnest discussion in Catalán, which seemed to be philosophical rather than political. One of them withdrew into the depths of his chair now and then to read a newspaper, but each time the interest of the talk pulled him back into active attention. Another twirled a red rose while he listened, as if red roses were quite as rational things to carry as canes, and we wished we had the courage and independence to carry red roses in our own proper lives outside Spain. A late-comer took advantage of a pause in the talk to tell a dramatic story that failed to raise the laugh he expected, which made him look like a man who finds he has gone into the wrong room. But even towards him there was neither flippancy nor vapidness in the attitude of the group.

They seemed to be ordinary young men of Balaguer, healthy, sober, and mentally alert, missing nothing within their range of life. Yet how different, we thought, from the groups of ordinary young men who meet together at night in Australia, America, to indulge in stupid pastimes, coarse and empty conversation, dubious pursuits: to drink whiskey, gin and bitters, beer! These boys, like ourselves, were drinking coffee. We understood almost none of their talk, but we did understand, appreciate, their mental enjoyment. It may have been on no very high plane, but it was unmistakably intelligent. It sent us to bed in serene spirits.

I must have slept well that night, for I remember nothing of it, nor of breakfast the next morning. I regain a retrospective consciousness long after we crossed the first railway line we saw in Spain. I should remember that, because we saluted it in some way, that first trainline. My memory wakes up on the hard, rain-scoured clay, where the grass was dry, short, patchy, near Vallfogona. We entered this brown, sprawling, adobe village, which lies near the main road, only to buy lunch. The village low and open—so dazzled in the morning sun that its eyes were shut, its life withdrawn from the outside of its body.

Out, and on to the main road, our packs laden with the simplest of provisions. We walked again in the dust, seven kilometres of the Camino de Madrid en Francia behind us a gap, unknown, exchanged for Balaguer. Between the dull green crops our progress was rendered less than pleasant by the passing motor traffic.

There were many autobuses on the road that morning, one of them our old friend of the Lérida-Séo service, which had passed us each day hitherto, at a different time. We did not, I think, look daily for the appearance of that small, brown bus, because it never came with the regularity that makes a thing expected. Always, we hailed it as a familiar but *unexpected* thing, and we really greeted it, though hardly as an object that might have returned our greeting. Yet how it must have pitied us, making in many days a journey that it made so quickly itself! Or perhaps it looked upon us with disdain, as mean or foolish people; with compassion, as poor people. Hardly, I think, would it understand that we preferred to walk.

To our right, not far across the fields, were the two railway lines that make Balaguer the most remote, the furthest truly inland terminus of Catalonia; the broad-gauge line, straight from Lérida, and the narrow-gauge line, which leaves the trunk line from Barcelona to Lérida at Mollerusa, and comes up in an L-shaped bend to Balaguer. The former line is not shown on any map of Spain that I have seen. It must be new,* and perhaps explains those building activities, those signs of prosperity we noticed in Balaguer. Along these two lines there came, at the same moment, as if for our entertainment, a big train running easily, smoothly, and a pert little train rather out of breath, in a race for Balaguer. When Spain showed us railways, the demonstration was a good one.

The road soon passed under trees, excellent, untrimmed sycamores and locusts, shapely if not tall, and spreading a shade that is rare on "the Catalaunian plain." The wheat was high on either side, and there were hedges bordering some of the fields. It seemed to me, remembering the trees along stretches of the road between Artesa de Segre and Cubélls that, on this dusty lowland, they must plant them only where the soil is good enough, moist enough, to let them grow well.

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*Since the above was written, the agreement, reached in 1904 by France and Spain, to link the two countries more closely by three railways through the Pyrenees, has been partly carried out.

The line from Pau to Zaragoza, which passes through the Somport tunnel, near Canfranc, under what is believed by some to be Hannibal's pass, was opened on 18th July 1928.

The electrified line from Toulouse to Barcelona, via Puigcerdá, which passes through 52 tunnels and over many viaducts, was opened on 21st July 1929.

The third line, from St. Girons to Lérida, is still under construction. It is the broad-gauge line mentioned above, which had been extended, on the Spanish side, no further than Balaguer at the time of our journey.

At rest time, under this avenue, I retired into a tall crop of wheat, and half an hour later realised that I must have lost a duro there. A duro, a five peseta piece of massive silver, was too much to lose, with Lérida to enjoy and Zaragoza, the bank, still so far off. But how they weighed the pockets down, those big, heavy coins!

The fine avenue ended with the fine crops. Out into the open we came, to see, away to the right, not the river itself, but Terméns, by the river, and its twin, Menarguéns, on the far bank, places open to the sun—towns of mud, on a baked, bare land of clay.

Lunch time was near, and the low hills over which we were passing offered no shade. There was no attraction of green grass or hedgerow, and, for want of a better place in the barren distances ahead, we chose to stop at a low spot under a low embankment of the road, where the grass was fresher than elsewhere. Here, in the drifting clouds of dust raised by the passing motor lorries, under the gaze of people who passed by with mule teams, we ate food that had warmed with the day, and broke bread that was already dry and hard.

Here, too, we suffered an important loss. My pocket knife, our only implement for opening tins, disappeared in the dust. It was not only the loss of an indispensable tool that troubled me. That ladylike little knife, so smooth, so neatly rounded on the ends, was an attribute of myself, like my boots, or my watch. And I had acquired it by accident.

Four years earlier, when walking up a road where the dust was deep enough to cover my boots at each step, in the Santa Ana Canyon in California, I kicked something light and hard that was not a stone. It was that knife, buried under inches of dust.

And now, it had disappeared, in the dust of Catalonia! Evidently, it was a knife that loved a Spain reduced to its lowest terms. But to lose it meant that we must buy another knife at once, and that morning I had lost a duro!

Not much time was wasted over a tasteless lunch in an uncomfortable place. We went on, over the open, to Villanueva de la Barca, another village built of the material closest to hand—adobe. Men and youths lounging against the walls of the square called to us as we went across it. We were looking for a café, and found one that proved to be more extensive than the outside of the building would suggest. We passed through big, low rooms that were delightfully cool and clean, to an inner alcove, for coffee. In the outer part of the café were a number of men who seemed to have nothing better to do with the day at one o'clock in the afternoon than the loungers basking in the square. Siesta time, I suppose. Several children came and stood around our table, puzzled to know who and what we could be, until the patrón, a young and intelligent man, good-humouredly sent them off.

The track we took out of this village brought us close to the river, which glittered under the beating light, reflecting a taunt—in its everlasting passage of cool abundance—to the thirsty land. We guessed the common impulse—and slid down forty feet of rough, washed-out clay bank, and promptly stepped out of our clothes.

It was a much opener place than that of yesterday. Just above us were some of the back walls of Villanueva de la Barca, and the opposite shore was low, the country treeless. There was nobody in sight, and we swam and basked alternately, until we were quite sure that we were sunburnt.

Curiously, I felt far less hesitation towards these performances in France and Spain than I would have felt in more secluded places in Australia. This day, for instance, I felt strangely reassured by an irrational belief that I was undressing, swimming, and basking *in English*, and, as English was something that no likely spectator would understand, the likely spectator would see no offence against decency in our behaviour. It is this same kind of reassurance that always frees me to say intimate and truthful things in French which I would never utter in English, only, in this latter boldness, it is from English understanding that I feel protected, even when the person I am addressing is English! So we bathed in English, and were therefore not indecent.

It was most refreshing, until we started to dress, when we found that we were lazy, drowsy, sunburnt, uncomfortable and sticky in our clothes. But you understand so well the way out of certain difficulties; the stimulants for certain relaxations of the spirit. You said "Beer!"

Now, God made Catalonia partly that men might know the uses of beer, but in Catalonia they are ungodly to the extent of drinking little beer. There was none, we knew, in Villanueva de la Barca. For us, there was only the promise of Lérida, at the end of thirteen dusty kilometres. But the promise was enough. We faced those hot, thirteen kilometres buoyantly.

Almost at once we were rewarded by the sudden, far vision of Lérida itself. We stopped still, and cried out together: "How like Cubélls!"

Lérida, the fair coronet of a conical hill! An exquisite, far thing of turrets and pinnacles, delicately distinct, darkly airy, like the frozen smoke of a great bonfire in the bottom of the wide pan of the lowland.

Now, the aspect of Lérida is more elusive than that of any other town or city in the world. It is like an apparition, like the magic of Fata Morgana on the Hungarian Puszta—seen from here as a mass of towers on a volcano, from there as a confusion of unaspiring structures; and, once within, there are steeps and sideward-tilted ways, and running alleys and broad avenues, but of the great mound, of the soaring towers, the mind has no sense at all. Lérida vanished, to reappear only once or twice during the afternoon, in partial eclipse. But it had shown itself—and we were of its authority, drawn in fealty.

It seemed to me, as we passed over that stretch of increasing ugliness, that all the things we had seen and felt that were proper to this lowland had been weaving themselves into a climax, approaching what they call in mathematics a critical value, as we came nearer to Lérida. Things that had appeared singly at first had been appearing more and more together, until now, olive grove and wheat field and garden crop, horse and mule and goat and donkey, cart and car and bus and lorry and train, were all in balanced share of the land together. The very quality of the light had attained a fullness of character; a swimming brightness on things near, a dull glare that dazzled only after reflection; a hazy power in distance, tremulous below the pitch of mirage—a strong, tolerant, warm light, with no craft of illusion. Even in the sickness of things, the abuse of open lands, the blight on olive trees (which we first remarked near Balaguer), the intensity grew as we came nearer to Lérida. This big town, or small city, seemed like the culmination of the land's effort to put forth. It was the tight button of disc florets in a dun corolla, in a flower of dingy beauty.

The long, dusty road undulated and swung in gentle monotony. At a place where we rested on dry, wiry grass near a claypit, there passed us a young boy on a donkey, and a shy little girl with pigtails, walking beside them, the pace set by the donkey. A most unchivalrous brother, he seemed. Further on, after we had overtaken the children, trees lining the road became less straggly, and we felt that we were in the aureole of the town, though still in farmland. There were untidy, isolated buildings here and there, and at last, where, in spite of the lightness of traffic the road, the place, felt frequented, exhaled the influence of a continual passage of things, we crossed the main railway from Barcelona. Almost at once came the junction of the highroads from both Barcelona and Tarragona. In an angle between the roads were the buildings of an agricultural experimental station. Urbanism.

We turned sharply to the right, to find our tree-lined road transformed into a spacious avenue of the most massive sycamores I have ever beheld. There were double rows of trees lining a promenade on each side of the avenue, truly monumental trees of grandeur and stateliness, a strong, living colonnade, springing upward, vaulting the roadway, the alleys, in tranquil, Gothic sombreness, the apotheosis of the sycamore. I have seen finer trees, solitary trees of other kinds, but never a greater nobility of trees in rows.

To the left were shady public gardens with bandstands and dance pavilions, and many people were walking there—soldiers with girls, members of the Guardia civil, townspeople in dull clothing. To the right, between the avenue and the big railway shunting yards, was a long row of buildings. On one of them we read the sign "*Cervecería*"—beer! A place where beer is sold!

We went straight to it, sat at an iron table on the verandah and watched the crowd as we drank long glasses of light, cool Spanish beer, drank it slowly, after thirteen kilometres. We had been there perhaps ten minutes when the children with the donkey passed by —the little girl still walking, at just the same pace. How far back was it?

The desire for beer having been fully satisfied, we proceeded into town. The avenue led to a stone bridge across the Segre, here a powerful river. The town-front, along the far bank, was an imposing esplanade under a long cliff of substantial modern buildings, corresponding, in the disposition of things, almost perfectly to Balaguer. It looked, indeed, like Balaguer itself, grown rich and grandiose. Here, however, there was a round stone arch of antique beauty in the cliff, facing the end of the bridge—the narrow doorway of the provincial capital of Lérida. Smooth stone pavement was so unfamiliar to us that, notwithstanding our cautious steps, you slipped on the doorstep of Lérida and were only saved from a fall by an acrobatic recovery of balance. You said—but no; I won't repeat it.

Once through the narrow door we were in town, in a tiny, sloping, cobbled square, among closely packed houses, the streets running like fissures between them. Of trees, the river, broad fields in the sun, the mind took no count in there—inside. Streets that continued the line of the eastern side of the square were parallel to the esplanade, to the river, to the cliff-front—we knew that. But from inside, the existence of the latter things seemed annihilated.

We approached a person who was standing near a pissoir of unsanitary odour, and asked him about an hotel. He was affable, laconic, and had perception. He merely said "Come!" He led us a few doors up the Calle de Esterería, to No. 9, where barrels are made in the shop on the ground floor, but where, after climbing a dark, narrow flight of stairs, we were taken to the door of the Fonda del Porvenir, "la más económica de todas las de la Captiál"—the very cheapest of them all. In the door was a grating or peep-hole on the level of the eyes and through it we were discreetly inspected before admittance. Our guide made genuine protest when we offered him a tip, but accepted it when we insisted. He also conducted a negotiation with the tiny, lively little wisp of a woman who owned the fonda, so that we had to do no talking at all.

This weightless midget of a patrona, who barely reached my shoulder, middle-aged but brisk as a girl, had eyes of dancing vitality and kindly wit. She led us further upstairs, chatting gaily, and put us in rooms that were poor but perfectly clean, you in one overlooking the main street, me in one over a back street. The furniture was old, flimsy; the bedclothes, towels, and mats very worn, faded; the locks on the doors primitive: but it felt honest, with that scrupulous proud honesty of simple people. You were able to contemplate the opposite window-balconies that were screened by long, white curtains that hung over the railings, and to watch the crowd below. My street, or streets, for I could see two, were empty and silent. We went down, asked the hour of dinner, and went out into the town.

First there was a knife to be bought. The cutler assured us that Solingen was in Spain! I bought the Solingen knife for seven pesetas, and you made the suggestion of a tin opener, also bought.

Now, that knife, which replaced one strangely found and strangely lost, was my only solid trophy from our journey. But, as if the same remote strands of circumstance can be lightly blown together more than once, and by similar chance, that knife too, was strangely lost.

You will remember that on Easter Sunday we lunched by the roadside among bracken and brambles, near Guéret. On a subsequent Easter Sunday I lunched again by the roadside, again among bracken and brambles, but with Pauline and a German boy, in Sussex, and there lost the knife from Solingen.

Through these two knives vague patterns seem to have striven, with no evident meaning, to stamp twice, with a faint impress, hispanic dust and the brambles and bracken of wayside lunches at Easter, lightly sealing to the strand of our journey my past and my future, by threads that the blades of lost knives will not sever; weaving this journey into the attenuated web I drag behind me that is memory, whose drawn-out filaments do not snap, but only dissolve. Thus has my jealous vigilance—for no other thing was to touch this journey of ours—been frustrated, by a mysterious control which insists that all things be woven into one thing.

But at Lérida, where beautiful knives marked Toledo and Madrid failed to become the resultants of desire, purpose, and means, we knew nothing of this. The sun was still shining and there were towers on a hill—somewhere. We went to find them. Under an arcade in the street leading down from the square were the sellers of goats' milk, all in a row, with vessels and cans all silver-clean.

We turned up narrow streets to the west, to find them steep, their round, river cobbles treacherous under our hobnails. The streets were a maze to giddy the senses of those in search of occult towers, and only chance brought us out on to a gentle, broad, dusty slope in an open, upper town, where we saw the fortress on our right.

There were many soldiers, and as we went up towards the great gate in the wall we asked one of them if we might go inside. He answered that since the mobilisation the fortifications were being used as barracks, and that the public was admitted only during certain hours of the morning. We turned, disappointed, to go down again.

Two middle-aged men, dressed in rather old, sombre suits and wearing caps, came towards us. They looked, perhaps, like workmen in their easy clothes, and they seemed to have singled us out, like people who have rapidly selected from among the bystanders the persons most likely to give satisfactory information or directions. We stopped, by a natural impulse, to let them speak. With movements that were almost imperceptible, certainly imperceptible to anybody passing by, each turned, lifted, or pulled open the coat at the chest for a mere moment as they stopped, and said, like a quiet "good day," the one word "Agentes!" We glimpsed the metal badges—heard the word. Secret police.

At once, without waiting for the request, we produced our passports, which they examined with practised rapidity and handed back in a manner that would barely have attracted the notice of bystanders. We then fell to talking in a most friendly way, like four acquaintances who have just met by chance. Our papers were in order and that was all they wished to know. They made no attempt to "pump" us, but we explained ourselves briefly, feeling that it was well to do so. They were very interested to converse with us for a few minutes, expressed a real admiration for what we were doing, and when we said good-bye we all shook hands, like persons who esteem each other.

These men made a deep impression upon us. They were so firmly courteous in their manner, so deftly direct and clear in announcing their purpose, yet so natural in their approach as to betray that purpose to none but ourselves. They were wholly unblemished by those intangible traits that reveal, even under the cleverest assumption of amiability, the bully, the sneak, the overbearing martinet, the person who will readily abuse authority. They were under no need of assuming behaviour, for they behaved as themselves, with no faintest change when the encounter passed from the official to the personal phase. We knew that we were in the presence of selected men of consummate training, and, withal, most likeable, attractive men. We felt confidence in them, and later experiences, one in the train near Avila, another at Salamanca, deepened our admiration for their corps, for the way in which it does its work and exercises its enormous power. They are not in the least alike, these agentes; they are not of a type. It is impossible to recognise them until they announce themselves, for they resemble all decent kinds of men except those whom one might suppose to be detectives. Evidently these two had seen us talking to the soldier. We were strangers, in discontented Catalonia, and Spain was at war. But our passports were accepted as our honour manifest and not a question was asked. The workings of Spain, as you said more than once, are not to be seen on the surface, are not all on show. And I certainly preferred this dignified, efficient secrecy of the agentes at Lérida and elsewhere, to the clumsy publicity of the gendarme at St. Sevère.

The fortress was closed to us; there were steep streets, but no great, dominating hill; towers did not exist. We went back into town, finding on the way one of those lovely old buildings, ecclesiastical, we thought, which seem to have been hollowed out of mass rather than to have been piled up into mass. It surrounded a square courtyard into which we peered and then boldly penetrated, a hollow square of two tiers of graceful, depressed arches, with balcony and balustrade, open stairway, door, and windows, all in a finished, simple harmony of the Renaissance.

The arcaded street of the milk cans was full of people. The flood-tide of paséo. Men and women, youths and maidens, came in a surging throng down the slope, a slow procession, like an over-pouring urged by pressure from behind, straining through the narrow space. It was a most good-tempered crowd, laughing, chattering, not rowdily but in subdued gaiety, and it took no notice at all of the pushing, jostling, and squeezing of people—of ourselves—trying to move against the stream.

We got back to the fonda only to be told that there would be an hour to wait for dinner. We had misunderstood the time stated, were confused between the hora oficial, Summer Time, and the real time. Instead of going out, we drew chairs up to a window-balcony in the dining room. The opposite balconies were all on slightly different levels. The long, soft, white curtains billowed, swayed, so gently, with the lifting pulses of the lazy breeze. Below, the crowd, not so dense here, and brilliant with the cloaks of the officers, blue lined with crimson and worn with an air.

The waiter, a young fellow of about twenty, decent, but beyond the reach of innocence, talked to us in jerky phrases as he set the tables—asking friendly questions and offering information. Some Italians who were staying at the fonda seemed to cause him annoyance or envy. Italians? Yes, he said, there were many Italians in Catalonia. Then—"Hacen muy bien—tienen autos—venden ropa—They're doing well—got cars—sell clothing." But whether he meant all the Italians in Catalonia or only those at the fonda was not made clear, for the patrona, who was evidently his mother, came in and unmistakably told son in Catalán to "get on with the job."

The Italians, who kept to themselves at dinner, looked less prosperous than we had expected. The meal was plain, but well cooked. I remember it only on account of the excellent, round, light loaf of snow-white bread served to each person—loaves the size of small rock-melons—and of the foolish old man at our table who would try to be witty and conversational in spite of Italian scowls.

The town-habit sent us out for coffee, to a café opposite the stand of the vendors of goats' milk. Like the other Spanish cafés we had seen, it was plainly decorated in light, pleasing tones, the furniture plain, comfortable, and everything well maintained. How rarely did we see dinginess, old paintwork, excessive decoration, a too liberal display of mirrors, in the cafés of Spain! Here in Lérida we drank coffee from cups instead of glasses, and here too we first saw "the *limpiabotas* man," the bootblack, as I would say, when you would correct me, and call him the shoe-shiner, or something like that. He came round in the café calling "Limpiabotas!" which is not exactly "Shine, Sir?" for it is not a question nor is there any servility in the tone. He made us realise that the Spaniard likes clean boots, as he likes bright glassware and sharp knives. Did we ever get a blunt knife in Spain? I think not.

A walk along the river-front, where we felt solitary; then through the round arch, and back to the fonda. In the dark passage leading to my room I brushed against wet, hanging things, which the light from the room showed to be the family washing of the fonda, on lines that were strung along the passageway! Quaint, reasonable procedure in a dry, dusty country. With a room to myself, I read late that night tales in "*The Shining Pyramid*," things which I felt I must read out to you as soon as a chance should occur. Street calls below my window aroused me to a bright morning. Where——? Oh, Max was in the other room, of course!

"Son" was in the dining room, setting the tables. He looked at the clock and said in some astonishment that we were muy temprano—very early. We thought not, but was 8 a.m. really 7 a.m.? He and his miniature mother wished us feliz viaje—bon voyage, when we paid our bill of ten pesetas and set out for Fraga, which is not in Catalonia.

The tiny square was a busy market place at half-past eight in the morning. Women stood behind wide trestle benches, selling foodstuffs. The game and poultry, rabbits and chickens, whole or portioned, were exposed in a neat display of clean dissection, the livers, hearts, gizzards, and kidneys also prepared for sale—a curiously pleasing harmony of impure, dull colour under dull gloss, like pliable crockery.

Lérida seemed to be extraordinarily large (as if it had been smaller yesterday), and on the way out we passed through broad, modern streets where there were schools and colleges into a different quarter on the edge of the town where there were canneries for fruit and vegetables. We knew of these canning activities, because tins of tomatoes, apricots, that we had bought for wayside lunches, bore the labels of Lérida, some of them printed in English. Motor traffic, too, was heavy in the outskirts of the town. The morning buses for distant places kept passing, one of them, we noticed, marked "Fraga."

We thought that we were nearly out of town when we came suddenly upon the south-eastern corner of the fortifications, the road running almost at the foot of the wall. Where, in this baffling place of deceptive extensions, was the great mound, the soaring masonry? But the crops and the olive groves were soon about us.

We were overtaking another pedestrian whom we viewed with some anxiety as we did not want strange company to invade the seclusion of the miles. We paced him carefully, to maintain an even distance, until, like the pedlar near Châteaumeillant, he turned into a side road and disappeared into an olive grove.

We were then able to release our attention for the distant view to the south: the mournfully barren valley of the lower Segre, cream-buff, and monotonous in a hazy light. This would be our last view of the Segre, our companion river, which we were leaving now, to make our own way to the Ebro, far above the place where the Segre enters it. Away to the south-east was a lonely factory building, which we assumed to be the nitrogen plant erected during the War. We remembered now that somebody had told us about the nitrogen plant. Close to us were olive groves, blighted, the leaves a sickly, yellow-green. A monotony of low farmland, poor, pulverent, the southern end of the plain of la Noguera, less fair than its name, which means walnut.

I like these musical names with meanings, but most names, so far, were just names. I have sought meanings for them all—for Urgél, that name which had haunted our route all the way from the mountains; for Tiurana, and the others—but they have no meanings that I can discover, except *artesa*, which means a kneading trough or a canoe, neither meaning acceptable nor capable of bestowing charm upon Artesa de Segre.

Eleven o'clock brought us to Alcarráz, unpleasing, a straight lane of low houses, but a place whose name has a sensible meaning. It refers to unglazed pottery, and Alcarráz certainly felt rough, dry, porous. As in all the smaller villages, shops could not be distinguished from houses, for none of the Spanish shops we had yet seen on our route bore painted signs nor had windows for display. We had to walk along peering through doorways, and at Alcarráz we bought parts of our lunch at three different places.

At the panadería—the bakery, their bread was delightful. At the especiería—the grocery store, we were less fortunate. Their only portable food was chocolate and sausage. At the cueva—the wine shop, a dour old woman who served us guessed that we were about to lunch and showed unexpected good-will by saying that we might sit and eat our lunch in there, if we wished. On explaining that we intended to eat it by the roadside, a man, who had evidently been listening, came in, and kindly proceeded to enlighten our ignorance.

An assured, unshaven man of good intentions, who called me hombre. He explained to us what we could see for ourselves on the map, and he persisted in saying that the distances it gave were wrong, which they were not. Above all, we must not take the wrong road at the fork and go to Soses—no, it would be silly, inconvenient, to find we had gone to Soses. We must be careful. I was trying to hide my impatience, behaving, under ancestral control, like a perfect little gentleman, feeling, inwardly, that I wanted to smash this individual's head, and, as usual, hating the contradiction—the shamming. Why be patient with such unreasonable people—with all the unreasonable, domineering people? You, behind me, were nearly on the boil, and at last you dragged me away, telling me exactly what I should have been told—thirty years earlier.

The man was still solemnly warning us that we must not go to Soses. Soses? Who would go to a place with such a name? Só-ses, all three esses sharply hissed. Who would stop longer in Alcarráz than necessary? If a thin stream of water were directed against a wall in Alcarráz it would all soak in, make a spreading patch of dampness, and not a drop would trickle to the ground. A porous place—near Soses. We went.

Into the open country. Into gentle hills of dry grass, most carefully avoiding the only turnoff—the road to Soses. We walked for an hour over this gently rolling country, towards real hills. Eventually we found a wheatfield, separated from a large, irrigated olive grove by a ditch and a long, low embankment.

Within the shade of the first row of olive trees we had our lunch—a nasty lunch. Wine, dry sausage, and chocolate do not agree with even the sweetest of bread. Still, the place was delightful, inviting us to stay, and we sat, lazily watching the traffic on the road: covered carts drawn by files of three, four mules, going towards Lérida; autobuses with baggage on top, passing both ways.

A man was ploughing in the field behind us, approaching, receding, shouting now and then to the animals. This way and that went the buses. The mule carts drew along with a wrick-et wrick-et sound. A to-and-fro of everything.

It was there that I fell to thinking of the Catalán problem. In our week of passage through this inland province of Catalonia, its only province which does not border on the sea, there had been little indication to us of the existence of a problem. Nearly everybody along the road spoke some form of Castilian as well as Catalán. Everybody with whom we had talked long enough had referred sooner or later to Barcelona, in a natural way that showed Barcelona to be the natural focus of the land. Madrid was never once mentioned by any of these people, as though it were too remote to have any relation to their daily lives. Our host of Cubélls, indeed, when we told him that we were making for Zaragoza, said "Ah—then you will be in Aragon," as if Aragon were a far-off, foreign country. We ourselves felt strongly that this lowland of inner Catalonia was itself "a country," a natural unit of the land, but in its people we had been able to detect neither political interest nor sign of discontent. They merely spoke of Barcelona as if it was their capital. Because that natural, inevitable circumstance is not admitted by the rest of Spain, there is a Catalán problem.

And here, too, I found the key to another puzzle. Lérida, Balaguer, Cubélls, Séo de Urgél, the larger towns, had been placed where they would be safe! They were points of defence, each (except Cubélls) with a citadel! And, as points of defence, they were not all where the large towns might be expected to have grown. Some eight miles above Lérida the Noguera Ribagorzana, whose canals water the plain of la Noguera, joins the Segre, but Lérida is not there—it is at the safe place, on the great mound, further downstream. Terméns and Menarguéns, which *are* at the confluence, are mere villages. Nine or ten miles above Balaguer the Noguera Pallaresa joins the Segre, but Balaguer is downstream, at a defensible point. Perhaps, too, it is there partly because the confluence is in rocky, sterile country. But these places are the old, inland strongholds, the watchful places with towers. Artesa de Segre is at a crossroads, where the road from Lérida to Séo crosses the road from Tarragona to Tremp, up in the mountains, and where the latter road crosses the Segre. Pons is where the river leaves the steeper woodland for the gentler lowland, where the slope changes in the river bed, and there is a weir, an effluent canal. The other places we had seen were all of lesser rank; the convenient dwellings of those who tilled the outlying fields—the market points of little districts.

Towns of tall houses, closely packed, blue, brown, shady, cool—towns where to be inside was to forget the outside world—villages of the plain, low and open, built of mud, with great, cool rooms within—villages of the woodland, tall as towns—towns and hamlets of Catalonia! Yonder over the hills was Aragon, no longer far Would we be leaving you, Catalonian strongholds and peaceful villages, to find in Aragon across the hills, a difference? We had grown to be fond of you, busy hives in the dust, where no man had said, as they say so often in France, that life is hard. You are not of a rich land. By toil and artifice you make it yield, but your people smile. In your land to meet men is to greet men. What then of Aragon? Or was the Catalán really the Spaniard?

A definite feeling that it was afternoon aroused us from this idle mood. We went forward again, past the big olive grove, to the hills that are called the Sierra de la Mezquita. Now, *mezquita*, I find, has no vegetable associations with your home town in Texas, and, as you know, not a single mesquite bush was to be seen on the sierra. It means "a mosque." That act of dictionary-worship has brought before my mind a clear picture of something which, if it be in its right place, we had both forgotten. It is of a small, square building, almost a cube, surmounted by a dome; a Moorish door in one wall, little Moorish windows in the others; a whitewashed, adobe building, close to the road, in the open foothills. A real mosque! Do you remember that? Alcarráz is a Moorish name, for it begins with *al*, and it suggests that the picture is true. Or, has the subdued glare of that afternoon, in that open, rather dazzling place of dull, pale colours, called from my Egyptian memories a poor, roadside mosque and placed it in that falsely native setting? I will not assert that the mosque was there, but I believe it was. There must be one somewhere near there, else why have a Sierra of the Mosque?

We were soon in the hills, table-topped hills (*mesas*, as the physiographers call them, copying the Spaniards), with here and there an outlying sugarloaf (a *butte*, as we say in physiography, this time copying the French). Mesas and buttes nearly always go together. Why?—Consult a text-book! We were, indeed, soon on what seemed to be the flattish, even top of the sierra, which was not really a range, but was, rather, a step from the lowland up to a higher lowland.

We noticed, on the way up, that the olive trees became healthier as we climbed—improved at once with elevation, as you causally put it. And not far past the edge of the sierra we crossed officially into Aragon, passed out of the province of Lérida into that of Huesca. The road surface at once became poorer, but along the road were newly planted trees, the pathetic poles of sapling elms, attempting, with dumb, vegetable valour, to survive in a place where trees are not meant to grow.

For a long time we followed a gently undulating road, the soil getting barer, redder, and more washed-out, as we proceeded. Here and there were notices, crudely written on crude boards, the inscriptions: "Vedado—Inclosure," or "Acotado de caza—Hunting Limit," though there seemed to be nothing there to hunt but small birds. We overtook a waggon, which remained in sight behind us. Then came a long, open stretch, that got gradually higher, grassier, mounting to a ridge. Where the marked ascent of the ridge began, was a large concrete tank with flumes leading into and out of it, but all empty. A little way further on where the road entered a cutting a small canal crossed overhead in a conduit, the Canal de Aragón y Cataluña. We held a consultation here which resulted in you climbing up the face of the cutting with a canette to investigate the canal. You returned to report it—dry!

We were thirsty, both somewhat out of humour (though not with each other), hot, and little interested with our surroundings. We sat, in a bend of the cutting, longer than our customary time for rest, and it felt like breaking the law, so strong had our habit of march become. We sat there for some time after the waggon overtook and passed us.

A few turns of the cutting, however, put us again in front of the waggon and led us down into the open, to a great, shelving flat where dry, sandy watercourses united in dry marshland; where, on the far side, the road passed gently up a long slope through a big vineyard. Here, the tendon of your heel suddenly gave you sharp pain, made you limp, until we had to stop. We sat by the road while you removed your boot and massaged your heel, within a stone's throw of a small, lonely house, the only house we had seen on these hills. A woman came several times to the door to gaze at us in doubt and wonder, but she did not speak, nor did we.

The vines here, and the currant bushes between them, were in good condition, in spite of the poor aspect of the place. The vines, pruned to low, stout stocks only a few inches high, had each sprouted three or four new branches that rose almost vertically from the stocks, each vine bearing no more than three or four bunches of grapes, young, green, as yet unswollen to translucency. Very different indeed it looked from the French vineyards.

After cautious trial you found that you were able to walk, and in a quarter of an hour the heel was well, or you said it was and made no complaint. I then began to feel ill, the penalty of eating greasy sausage and chocolate with heavy wine. The road wound into red, clay hills, with deep, washed-out gullies, trenches, and scoured furrows everywhere, a miserable landscape, a real zone of separation.

At the next halt a rough, unkempt person with a gun, but with no signs of success in hunting, also chose to rest on the roadside a hundred yards from us, watching us. My mind ran to bandits and I became interested in the time. But he rose to move when we did and he went the opposite way. At length, I had to retire to a gully, feeling very sick. Oh, but this afternoon on the desolate fringe of Aragon was not going well. When I returned a sumptuous car sped quickly past us bearing middle-aged ladies, elegant, pompous, who would sleep in Zaragoza that night, doubtless in a smart hotel, the chauffeur in a second-rate one. We despised them, and, as a punishment perhaps, I had to retire again to a gully as the car swung round a bend and up a curve to disappear over a grassy hill.

Further on, the country quickly became less arid, the hills opener, and several flocks of sheep were browsing far apart, scattered over the waves of empty land. The sheep were of all the colours possible among sheep, black, brown, white; black and brown, black and white, with long tails; and the statuesque, motionless, lonely shepherds appeared from a distance to be picturesque persons clad in rags.

At last the feeling of kindness invaded things. Grass became relatively plentiful; there were small, terraced olive groves in each bend of the road, in the higher, hollow places, the trees big and healthy, the pruning finished, each little grove neat as a boy who has just had a haircut.

I knew that we were gradually rising into a kind of high freshness, more of the air than of the earth: that there was a growing relation to distant things, a far spreading of the mind; a lifting of the body to a high place for some purpose or experience.

A rolling mass of big hills fell off to the right, our road bearing steadily that way in grand open curves, to disappear over a fold a mile ahead. On the left the smooth hillside rose to the sky. In a hollow bend not far in front of us a group of workmen turned from the road to follow a straggling, worn track up the hillside and over a saddle of the hills. When half-way up they turned, shouted to us, made signs to follow them. That was the short way into Fraga! We followed, climbing, and they went on. At the top we turned to look back.

Lérida, Cubélls, down and afar, sprang from their mounds like pillars, in a vast, stupendous tranquillity that faded in gossamer brown to the haze at the world's edge. Lérida, fifteen miles away: Cubélls behind it, like its own tiny twin, its miniature replica, forty miles off to the north-east—St. Michael's Mount and Mont St. Michel of a calm, brown sea. It was not grand—it was vast. It was like the stillness of a loud sound. We gazed across it with a wistfulness beyond wistfulness, for not only was our contemplation a farewell to Catalonia—we wanted something more. Where, we asked, were the Pyrenees?

XXIV

PILAR

Fraga, if I am not mistaken, means the same thing for both of us—a girl. A tall, plain, petulant, dissatisfied girl; the girl Pilar. To me she is a symbol of the drudgery of common life that *is* life to many women. Nothing extraordinary in that. But to find her in Fraga makes her eternal, because Fraga is not a town of to-day—it belongs to the past, is the past, of another, remoter century. Fraga, remote in time, remote in space, sunken and locked in a chasm of the hills, a secret of the eagles!

You, with your ardent belief in what lies around the next corner, must live in the future to a greater extent than is usual. I live, at present, more than is usual, perhaps, in the contemplation of the past. I believe that, from the moment when we turned our backs to Catalonia, left it subsiding into the past behind the hill, you expected something from Fraga, something to remember. Which of us, I wonder, is the happier for his way of looking at things, the one who expects and sometimes finds, or the one who sometimes meets the unexpected?

While we were making a rough way down the track, a track that soon betrayed itself to be an old road whose once metalled surface had been washed out and scoured into ruts and furrows by the infrequent rainstorms of decades, a road, a track, so claimed by nature in its disuse as to have been almost completely recovered by the landscape as a part of the red hillside, there remained before my eyes a visionary Catalonian Plain. I could not leave it.

Things of the moment were vivid enough. I saw the trim vineyard on the brow of the hill to the right, the vines in full leaf, not in the opaque, dull dress of the height of Summer, but brightly translucent in the clear tide of Spring. They were robust and healthy, red soil between them neat and newly turned. I saw that the old, washed-out road was coming to the edge of a deep barranca on the left, a gulch.

But the future, to-morrow, did not exist for me then, as at so many times it has not existed for me. To-morrow, or the future, has had to present itself in the definite form of a vista of the land over which I will pass to-morrow; or I must know the manner in which hours, days, of time to come, shall be spent. A ticket for a journey, an appointment for dinner, the theatre, make real the time between now and then, and people the interval with unknown certainties of encounter. Beyond that, beyond the furthest disposition of time to come, there is nothing. I cannot foresee, imagine, what will become.

But we had not far to go down the track before to-morrow announced itself. The road of to-morrow, far, far away, miles away across an intervening space of open valley, and up, high up, higher than we were ourselves. It was only a glimpse of a thing in hiding, for we scanned the bare, open hills to see how it got there, and saw nothing but open hills. The main road to Madrid was lost, withdrawn, concealed in the sweeping spaciousness, betrayed only by a far-off meander of titled, re-entrant curve, just under the level skyline of the hills across the valley. Tiny, conspicuous, laboriously ascending, this little stretch of distant road seemed to call us onward like a scout in our van. The road of to-morrow. My mind swung around like a compass toward it.

The valley ran, a sundering moat, between us and to-morrow—the valley of the Cinca. It was wide, deep, with abrupt walls and a flat floor, a straight groove gouged out of the high, bare land. It lay open, far to the north-west, upstream, the river bright like a vein of enamel, and flanked by the unglazed freshness of green cultivation.

This trench, that opened the distance of an already open world, held too an intimacy in its flat floor, a power to suck down, from the level beam of unconfined impression, banyan roots of perception that drew the mind toward ditches of murmuring, seeping water; to reeds and overhanging trees on the edges of moist fields; to soft, green crops and ripening fruit; to animals and burdens and labour unseen; to the tiny doings of tiny farmers on the riverland; to life clinging to the narrow ribbon of water where the earth is so ample, so bare: and the eyes overlooked it all, for the sake of looking far, far.

It was a very different thing from the Segre, this Rio Cinca, broader, shallower, confined between walls. Here and there were bars of sand or shingle; here were rapids, there dead-water. One felt the slumbering temper of tumultuous floods, the scouring away of all obstruction, the bearing of a vast, gritty burden; and the sudden slackening of waters, dropping their sands; a weariness of tearing and tormenting the masses of shingle; a subsidence to clear flow, darting past or slackening among the sandbanks, but letting the stones lie still.

A fitful river, this. Yet, it joins the Segre, some ten kilometres below Fraga, to help bear to the Ebro water from half the length of the Pyrenees.

For the Segre drains the Pyrenees westward from the Sierra del Cadi to their loftiest peak, the grand Maladeta whose top is more than eleven thousand feet in the air, and the basin of the Segre is the province of Lérida. The western side of the basin separates Catalonia from Aragon,which is to say that the Maladeta ordains their separation. It is no accident then, this sundering by rivers here, but a real thing.

The basin of the Cinca drains the loftiest segment of the Pyrenees, from the Maladeta westward to the Pic de Vignemale, and it covers three-quarters of the province of Huesca.

It is as if there ran, from the summit of the Maladeta to the confluence of the Segre and the Cinca, a line of parting that separates the waters and the life of the land. Even language and dialect, Catalán and Aragonese, respect that line. But in their lower courses it is the Cinca, not the Segre, which sunders the land, the Cinca which is the true obstacle. There is also a corresponding distribution of rains—but what were we, who did nothing but walk steadily across the country, stopping nowhere longer than to sleep the night, to know of the distribution of rains? Much, I say, for we *walked*, and the eye that sees need not wait to see the rains in order to know if it rain much or little in a country, or whether it has rained much or little this year. For it knows the signs. So here, we were on the edge of something; were leaving a dry country to enter a drier one, and the Cinca separates them, though the line men use to mark their separation was miles behind us. And the Cinca lay between us and to-morrow.

It did not lie there visibly for long. Lower and lower the track descended, and the hills rose about us robbing us of the distance, of all openness save that of the sky. Here and there we kicked a lump of creamy gypsum, washed out of the layers in the clay. Things near at hand became interesting. The gulch.

We were at its brink, looking into the walled amphitheatre of its inner end. The cliffs of banded clay were musical staves of colour in this amphitheatre! Green, yellow, purple, puce, red, brown, like the edges of a book of coloured leaves piled in harmonious alternation, and bright with the brightness of the coloured chalks of school. Not gay, for the hues were lustreless and impure; not neat, for the cliff was corroded by the rains; not regular, for there were thick bands and thin bands, with puce-purple and pale green in greatest expanse. But brilliant, incredibly brilliant in these drab hills, and a glimpse of the beauty that lies buried in the earth. These are the colours of dry wildernesses, of the "painted" deserts—of New Mexico; of the edges of Egypt and Arabia at the head of the Red Sea—and of certain pastel drawing .

A turn of the barranca, the gulch, revealed Fraga, a light blue town that rose, it seemed, from one straight and very wide street along the bottom of the gulch, by steps of houses clinging to the northern side—our side—almost up to the gentler hilltops. Near the bottom, close to the edge of the town, were a claypit and puddle for brickmaking, and stacks of moist new bricks of a cold, raw brown tint, were drying in the open air. Wood for building must be dear in Fraga.

Our track plunged, and became a precipitous footpath between the tall houses, and at the bottom we found ourselves in the wide street. Somebody pointed "upstream" to the fonda, a tall building with no sign to announce its character. We mounted the stairs to the first floor and were most affably received by a pair of old people —less so by Pilar—and were asked, as if we had come to pay a polite call, to sit down. Then the inquisition began.

There was no doubt, no question, about rooms, beds, dinner, breakfast, tariff. The old people dismissed all such negotiations as if they were things that arranged themselves automatically, to the satisfaction of all guests. Indeed, their behaviour was very like that of private hosts towards whom we were about to incur those debts of courtesy that are honoured in kind. Or were they like aged parents when the boys come home from college for the holidays? Very quickly we understood that these old people—and Pilar— wanted nothing less than a complete account of ourselves, and possibly might not be satisfied even with that. They were age, so sure of its wisdom, confronting youth (was I still youthful?), in our case no less sure of its wisdom.

The old people, patrón and patrona, were both about sixty-five, slow, portly, self-satisfied. They sat in deep, comfortable armchairs, in a plain, well-furnished room that had an inviting air of cosiness. Like two fat, lazy cats, they watched everything with a languid attention, even to guarding against any disturbance of their bodily repose. If anything had to be done Pilar did it—was told to do it.

Pilar, slim, dark, in a plain, light dress, moved about all the time, entered and left the room, disposing her interest in us and her duties in the kitchen in such a way that nothing was neglected. She did not bustle, but moved swiftly, with decision and purpose.

Maid of all work, she was another example of that strange dignity we had come to notice in Spain. She was a servant who obeyed orders, and she carried them out at once, impatiently perhaps, but with no hesitation or argument. But she was also a person, behaving with an unconscious assumption of equality towards all other persons, and her equality was accepted with a corresponding unconsciousness. Pilar *sold* domestic service to the old people in the same way as they managed their fonda for the benefit of strangers it was her occupation, and something quite independent of her moral worth. She sold them only such behaviour as belongs to domestic service, and the transaction left Pilar, the person, entirely free, independent, beyond their reach. And so it should be. But I am told that Anglo-Saxon salesmen are given to understand that they belong "body and soul" to the firm.

We sat, the four of us, while Pilar came and went. Question followed question from the three of them, with an unhurried pressure of insistence. At first it was annoying, for, like most old people who assume the right to catechise their youngers, they believed that respect between persons is something due from the young to the old *because* they are old, an assumption which is false and, ultimately, insolent.

Pilar, on the other hand, behaved in a different way. She was not merely satisfying curiosity, not merely using us to entertain herself. To her we were more than a providential novelty in the stagnant life of an empty fonda in Fraga. She frankly doubted us and was determined to make sure whether we were to be trusted or not.

Before long, however, it became so amusing that we forgot our annoyance and turned the interrogation into a game. A game of answering every question spontaneously, politely, truthfully, but in such a way that the answers contained the least possible amount of information. Each side drew the other on. The old lady's eyes fairly twinkled with delight for she understood the tactics at once and entered thoroughly into the spirit of mischievous, friendly duel. The old man was a little puzzled. Pilar was incensed, was quite sure that her suspicions were being confirmed, and cross-examined us like counsel for the prosecution. Your comment on the incident expresses it perfectly: "Mama and Papa do lazily but persistently pump us. Pilar does so briskly and impertinently."

It went on for about an hour, and by the end they knew all about us. A North-American and an Australian (fabulous monsters) walking from Paris to Madrid for the pleasure of doing so. The old people accepted the account but thought it very strange.

The downright Pilar did not believe a word of it. Had she been able to speak English I am sure she would have said: "There's more in this than meets the eye. You're up to some mischief." And more. She despised, not ourselves, for she was at no pains to hide a certain approval of us, but this business of consuming weeks of time in mere pleasure. She doubted that explanation, of course, and the doubt of it allowed her to like us in a way, but she thought it a very lame, shiftless explanation to give. To Pilar, one of the industrious and diligent, work was a god, and, with people who avowedly were not working, she had no patience.

Pilar withdrew to work, to prepare a dinner that would be mainly for us. The old people could think of no more questions. Again we asked to be conducted to our rooms or room, and for the first time the old man stirred, got up, and conducted us himself. It was the only task, I think, that was not done by Pilar. He took us up several flights of stairs, and on the way we asked for drinking water. He showed us the room first, a plain room with two beds, each in a deep, curtained alcove, and each with many frills on the pillowslips and counterpane. The walls were painted in a light blue-grey, the floor tiled, and the furniture, a wash-stand and two chairs, was very plain. Once more that austere sufficiency of Spain, that fills so many rooms with air and light and freshness—or with shade and coolness and peace. French doors opened on to a little balcony high above the wide street. We disposed of our things, and followed the old man down to a lower floor, for drinking water.

He took, from a hook on the wall, a porous earthen vessel of the "spouted carafe" kind, and then left us. Here we were at last, alone, in privacy, with a spouted carafe that contained nothing but water! Ideal conditions for the experiment, or they would have been, were we less prone to teasing each other. Laughter spoilt it. I tried, and failed. You also tried, and failed. I say that laughter spoilt it but I am sure, even now, that neither of us could learn to manipulate one of those treacherous things without weeks of secret practice. I have tried it since, with a teapot, but could make no progress. Doubtless the teapot is to blame. Il ne fait pas jaillir; plutôt il verse—it squirts not; rather does it pour. I squirm when cold water runs down inside my shirt. Nothing but a tight belt can frustrate it. Squirming, I ran downstairs to Pilar and pointed to my wet neck. Pilar pointed to a shelf where there were glasses, and I returned. Properly used, it was excellent cold water.

When we opened our balcony doors it was raining, a misty, refreshing rain that sank in powdery showers, or hung in the air and then slowly dissolved into the cool, bright light of the evening. By the time we had shaved it was clear outside, every flat surface glistening and clean, every dull one intensified, clarified in colour by the soaking moisture. Blue, blue was Fraga. There was a threat of an easy condensation of the hyaline mist, of more rain, in the cool, damp air. We were tired. Neither of us had had a light afternoon back on the road. We decided not to go out. There were beauty and entertainment enough to be enjoyed from our balcony.

This shower itself had been a lovely thing. Imagine the vineyard up on the brow of the hill now—that is, then. There is an ephemeral spirit in such things as a fall of rain in dry country, and a pain of oblivion. Fraga would doubtless telegraph to some office in Madrid "Late afternoon showery." Wine-growers of the hills, owners of sheep and goats, would doubtless look at the sky and say to themselves "Ah! A little rain. Bueno!" Then it would be forgotten, this gossamer, luminous, floating loveliness that brought a cool tranquillity to a whole town for an hour.

Only a little song could keep it in memory, and memory is life; but little songs are sadly out of fashion—they impede production, which is in fashion, by making people pause to listen, pause to remember. Pilar would sing, perhaps, without pausing. Machines, perhaps, may come to function so silently that men and women will be able to resume singing at their work. But, until then, it will be ridiculously bad form to sing the joy of rain. No, No. Let us record the number of points, accurately, and telegraph the figures to the Meteorological Bureau for the forecasters. But I can see no harm in doing both, for they are both excellent things to do. Nor can I see that one is more important than the other.

While you were shaving, I read again in "*The Shining Pyramid*," with a pause now and then to watch the changing sky. One passage that I read, in which Machen refers to Don Quixote's adventure with the little bark he happened to find moored to the bank of the Ebro, surely could not have been read by chance! In that passage the knight is compared to the saints-errant of Ireland and Brittany in the very early centuries of the Christian era, and the bark at once becomes a means offered by God to assist his knight (saint) in holy enterprise that shall disclose itself to unquestioning faith. No. I could not have read that passage by chance, as you shall see. For we were drawing close now to the Ebro itself.

You brought a chair on to the balcony and I read you some of those passages I had noted the night before, in Lérida, as things to read to you when the opportunity should come. Do you remember what you said, of that strange tale of an inn in a small, north-eastern English fishing town? A mere comment, worth more to me than the most carefully weighed criticism. You said that I might have written it myself! But we laid the book aside, for Fraga was coming out-of-doors now that the sky had cleared, and such life as passed below we had not seen before.

People were moving slowly up and down the street. Here and there stood groups of two or three persons talking in a lively way. It was not paséo—it was quite different from that; and paséo, if a habit in Fraga, must have been prevented by the rain. It was just an emergence into the street of those who had leisurely affairs outside their houses, or a wish to enjoy the fresh air at the end of the day.

The arresting feature of the scene was the uncommon brightness of the costumes. Nearly all the girls and younger women and some of the old men were dressed in peasant costume, in the dresses and suits that were worn in the country towns of Spain in Goya's time.

They looked most attractive, so in keeping with the old, blue town, yet so melancholy to contemplate, for the old men betrayed the passing, the slow extinction of local custom. When those few old men die—soon; in ten, fifteen years—there will not be a man left in Fraga who will wear peasant costume; and by that time the girls will have put away their pretty skirts and bodices and shawls, reserving the wearing of them for rare festivities and ceremonial occasion.

The girls were dressed in ample skirts, that fell gracefully from the close-fitting bodices, in prim lines, to stop half-way between knee and ankle. Very well cut were all those skirts, and very neatly they hung. Most of them were striped, but a few had a small, swastika pattern. The colours were dark and rich, with a predominance of heliotrope and black. All the girls wore short aprons, of blue, black, or grey, and nearly all had silk shawls drawn tightly around the shoulders and across the bosom but hanging freely in a peak down the back. Some good shawls there were, of black, and orange.

The old men were dressed in short, braided coats of dark blue or brown, with open roll-collars; black knee-breeches, open at the knees; white stockings, and low shoes. Around the heads of a few there were blue turbans. Others wore black straw hats with flat, narrow brim, low crown, and light band.

Always, I wonder why costumes so becoming and so distinctive should fall into disuse, give way to the commonplace, international wear of our modern civilisation. Men's clothing of the present day is dull and uncomfortable. The youths and young men of Fraga were the only ones who looked out-of-place there, gawky and untidy, in old, ill-fitting trousers and coats.

But modern clothes are made to a greater and greater extent in the factory; are standardised—that most commendable process for the quick and enormous production of inferior things at low cost, so excellent for business, for dividends, and for giving dull employment to large numbers of people on "wages."

The old costumes represent craft, pride of workmanship, the slow production of things good and durable, worthy of fine cloth and fine colour. It took time to make them, and they solved a problem that the modern world cannot solve yet, the problem of "what to do with our spare time." Consider only the fitting of those close bodices and flaring skirts; those knee-breeches!

Time and money and machines. The plain, modern dress has won. A victory gained at the expense of taste and beauty, and a victory that leaves us exposed to more than boredom. Oh, ye spinning wheels and homespun tweeds and linens! Boys and girls of to-day hardly know that there were such things. Boys and girls of to-morrow may know our family sewing machines only through the museum!

We have lost much, for the much our young age has brought. And meanwhile, it *is* young, with a nascent promise of a simple, mechanical beauty . . . When we recover from our belief in the shallow satisfactions of effect and showiness, shall we find ourselves on the way to a synthetic expression of taste through mechanical things?

But Fraga is yesterday. The only place we saw in Spain where yesterday, Goya's time, lives on.

Girls, young women, were coming up from the river now, with great earthen jars (*alcarrazas*) of water, two apiece, one borne on the head, the other under the arm, its base resting on the hip. Water for the evening meal. The ruddy brown jars were oval in elevation, circular in plan, fatly graceful, some with a broad band of simple pattern around them above the swelling shoulder. They had no handles, short, straight necks, and small bases. They reminded me of the "chatties" of Egypt; you, of certain jars we know in a shady patio in New Orleans. The women carried them with easy grace and held them without fatigue as they stood talking in twos and threes. But they had not the statuesque, slow, classical movement of black-robed women who go, at evening, with pitchers down to the Nile.

The darkness drew in and at about nine o'clock we went down to dinner. Pilar had prepared an excellent meal, the familiar succession of things that we were coming to know as dinner in Spain. And while we ate it Pilar asked pointed questions about our doings every time she came into the room. She was looking tired, out of temper, and I asked her if anything were the matter—said that she did not look well. That, as you were quick to tell me, was no very tactful thing to say, and Pilar resented it—became more direct than ever. "Why are you *really* doing this?" she asked. "Are you acting for your government?"

So that was it! Pilar thought that we were spies. And we were never able to convince her that we were not. Our different nationalities, our separate passports, our worn maps, the unshakable consistency of our story, all failed to convince Pilar. She shook her head, with an expression of "You can't tell *me*," and went on serving us. So womanly, to doubt us to the end. So unlike many women, while doubting us, to go on serving us, and with good grace.

The last thing she served us before coffee was a dish of almonds, and to me they were an adventure. There, in the land of almonds, I learnt for the first time what almonds should be. They had a deliciousness, a delicacy of flavour, a quality of hardness—or softness—and brittleness, that made all the almonds I had ever eaten before seem to be nothing but substitutes for almonds—doubtless made by machines and produced in millions! I wanted to declaim to Pilar, to the old man and woman, in praise of the almonds, but my Castilian was terribly inadequate. "Están muy buenas las almendras, muy buenas!" was the utmost I could achieve, and to be told that the almonds were very good was, to Pilar, to be told nothing new.

I do not know if the almond be indigenous in Spain. Its near cousin, the peach, comes from China, like so many other good things for which we assume the whole honour. But the almond has been at home in Spain for centuries; has there been cultivated, in surroundings naturally made for almonds. So, if you want to know what almonds should be, whoever you are, you must go to Spain. They are like the operas of Richard Strauss; to be heard properly nowhere but in Vienna, with Richard himself at the wheel.

Strongly under the influence of almonds, we climbed the stairs with great dignity and retired to our separate alcoves, to fall quickly into a dreamless unconsciousness. A few minutes later I pushed some frills and flounces from under my nose in a flood of daylight. Hail! Smiling morn! I could hear you hailing it too, through the partition. A fine, fine day.

We got dressed and stood on the balcony. The front of the house was festooned with washing, great sheets and curtains, on lines suspended from the balconies. "Pilar," said you, as you looked at this array, "has been up early." A flock of brown nanny-goats, all with tinkling bells at their necks and buxom, twisting udders astern, swarmed into the street from an alleyway, under the command of a deplorably picturesque goat-herd. Pilar darted from the house toward them with a jug in her hand. "That," said you, as one goat stood still and sighed her relief, "is for our coffee." You were an oracle, and Pilar a pastoral nymph, that clear, Mediterranean, Hellenic morning.

At the breakfast table was another guest, an intruder, a thick-set person wearing a béret at table. He was suffering from a strong urge to give us directions and information that we did not need, and told us, like the man at Alcarráz, the things that were said loudly and plainly by the map. We were good enough to be ungracious, called for our bill, and left the hotel with no ceremonious waste of time. For ahead of us to-day was a march of forty-six kilometres—twenty-nine miles.

We crossed the wide street to reach the provision store. The street itself, well paved, neatly kerbed and guttered, with a double row of slim, newly planted poles up the middle, a gesture of arboreal aspiration, seemed to have undergone recent civic improvement. How callow that wide street looked, now that we were in it.

The provision store was a pleasant, aromatic place, and the patrón an intelligent man who assumed that we were English, remarked "Es un país muy avanzado, Inglaterra—England is a very highly-developed country." It is illuminating to hear even so brief and general a comment as that, in a remote place like Fraga. The admiration, the generosity, the informed intelligence of the phrase were evident in the tone and manner in which it was uttered. He sold us some good quince conserve, carne de membrillos, but the other items of that lunch I have forgotten. While we were in there schoolboys gathered about the door; silent, interested, tidy little chaps, with books under their arms and their hair neatly combed. Shining morning faces, but they were certainly creeping like snail unwillingly to school. They thought the ingleses were much the better entertainment.

The wide street led us through a big arch and on to the river bank. We were astonished to see that an important part of Fraga presents a front to the river, and that the town is so compact, the houses so tall, that it must be a much bigger and more populous place than we had thought. Women were filling pitchers down at the gravelly strand, and there were several offensively smart, smug automobiles along the river front, one of them possibly the property of the informative person in the béret, who seemed to be a commercial agent of some sort. Not far to the north a long, low iron bridge carried the main road across the river.

Once on this bridge, we found that it was a structure of magnitude. The flat expansiveness of the river and the valley floor, the height of the hills, and its own horizontal simplicity of line, the exact repetition of its many spans, dwarfed it, made it look as if it were creeping from bank to bank. Not a beautiful, nor an ugly, but an undeniably fine, piece of engineering. Fraga was proud of it, and one question of the old people at the hotel was "Have you seen the bridge?"—"No." (Disappointment.)—"But we will cross it to-morrow." (Satisfaction.) Fraga may well be proud of the bridge. Only one main road has been able to throw itself across the Cinca, and the railway from Lérida to Zaragoza makes a long détour upstream.

On the western side of the river we passed through an avenue of grand sycamores and elms, unnoticed before, in the sweeping bareness of expanses. No Gothic aisle of Lérida, this, but a grateful sign that the people make the lean soil blossom where it can. Beside us here, on the right, was its verdant response, the end of the irrigated strip that runs down the valley, a spread of olive groves, the trees mature, healthy, robust, and watered by a canal. But this luxuriance was a narrow band.

The avenue came to an end, though prolonged formally for some distance by young poles of trees that struggled for life in places difficult for trees. Evidently these poles, the ones in the wide street in Fraga, and the ones far back, of yesterday, spoke of a policy in the province of Huesca, a policy of planting trees along the roads wherever there might be hope of life for trees. There are few suitable places, and we concluded that only the strong will survive the cruelty.

The road was entering the bare hills, beginning to wind up a long, dry valley of smooth, rounded, deceptively grassy contours. Up and to the west we could see those swinging curves that we had seen yesterday from afar, and most beautiful they were. The winding, looping, parallel lines of the oblique, ascending road belted the smooth hills like the girdle of a Saxon lady, revealing, as their simple nakedness did not reveal, a mathematical beauty of contour in these voluptuous hills, a thing of perfection. I remembered the pure, sloping curve of—how many?—three?—kilometres, away back in France, in Lot, near Reilhaguet, a thing perfect enough for exact expression in an equation. Here, the curve was emphasised by a parapet or beading of square, stone blocks on the outer edge, and the looping was more complex, re-entrant. The revelation of such curves makes me believe in an exact science of physiography, a quantitative study of the landscape that would be neither a desecration nor an impertinence.

But the way up to the curving road was long, a way for things with wheels. We decided to cut off the distance by turning up a side valley to walk across the hills. The Cinca, Fraga, were shut out.

What was the secret of Fraga, the lonely, hidden town? It was, I think, the secret or meaning contained in the old words "border," and "march." Fraga is a town, of the marches, in the debatable zone that is neither Catalonia nor Aragon, where mingle the interests and influences of both. A town too, on the very line that sunders them, the Cinca. And at that point on the Cinca where dry valleys yawn at each other across the river and offer negotiable descent from the rolling hills. A town at the downstream end of the irrigated lands of the valley floor. All these things are powerful, and make the town a place with something to guard. It is right that the past should survive in Fraga, and its alcalde should be an Earl of the Marches.

Just how much Catalonia and Aragon mingled in Fraga we did not know at the time, but think of little things like these: we saw the last spouted carafe there, albeit an earthen one, yet a Catalonian vessel. Our beds, for the last night but one, were in alcoves—a Catalonian, and, I believe, an Andalusian arrangement. It was our last tall, blue, Catalán town, but it was built of yellow, Aragonese brick. It was the last town with a closed "inside." And there, for the first time, we heard people say Tharagotha, not Saragossa as before. *Z*, and *c* before *e* and *i*, were there given their Castilian sound of *th*. Surely, a place of overlap, of mingling, in a zone of separation!

How the little town set limits to things! It was a point that marked an extreme in our journey, because it brought us, the road, closer down to the level of the sea than any other place between the frontier and Madrid. Along our whole road in Spain we were nowhere to descend lower than at Fraga, in spite of the lofty hills above the town. For Fraga itself is only three hundred feet above sea level. Lérida, in the bottom of the pan of the lowland behind us, is six hundred feet above the sea. So, too, is Zaragoza, in the lowland of the Ebro ahead of us. But Fraga was our limit of descent, one of the extremes of our journey in Spain.

And Pilar, left behind, but so often remembered since? Does she still answer the sharp and frequent calls of the old lady from distant parts of the house? "Pilar! Pilar!"

Pilar, eternal symbol of the drudge, was an admirable girl. I cannot believe that she would bring sweetness or serenity into any relationship, but she would bring strength and security. Pilar will be a loyal, hard-working wife, and she merits a good man. She will, of course, kill herself working for him, and she will never believe him when he protests that he was *not* drunk last night. I shall remember her frowns, her brisk energy, her full measure of unprejudiced service to us, and her drudgery. She, and the eternity of a night in a town, were shut out by the hills, cleft from our lives by the Cinca.

The hills were steep and rough and stony. We came upon the ruins of stone huts and some abandoned terraces that declared the hills to be a wilderness. Somebody had tried with valiant labour to live there, and had failed. Yet, we discovered flowers, one with a large seed pod, another striped with orange, and a third like the garden flower *Watsonia*. And we climbed, up and down, scrambling at last on to the road at a place where a man was ploughing a very small niche of good soil retained by a terrace wall. Not far above him a couple of little houses peeped over the very brink of the plateau.

Our map showed a blue fan here, a vantage point, but we found the next bend, a kilometre or more further on, to be a much better one, giving an extensive view over bare country to the east and north.

We could discern nothing, nothing at all, of what we had left behind. Only bare, monotonous country. But the road, after a long gentle climb that succeeded the steep ascent of the dry valley, was at last at the top. Before us lay the glorious wastes of Aragon, of bajo Aragón.

Yesterday evening there had been such a promise of to-morrow, and now, on this long morning, it was all yesterday. By a mysterious trick of memory, whenever I recall this departure from Fraga, my mind takes me up that stony, grassy valley in the shade of the late afternoon! I climb with regret, wanting, not the future, but the past. And, knowing well that we left Fraga on a bright morning, I leave it, climbing with difficulty, at the end of day.

It was written on our map that evening that we left Fraga at 9 a.m. on Thursday, the 29th of April. It is written indelibly within me that, in a stony valley, under the edge of the unknown, there faded from experience, from life, a dynasty of things behind us that were ours, familiar, permeant as the sunshine, until one day we left them, as things should be forsaken, at the end of day.

And now there is a new Kingdom.

XXV

THE LAND OF ARAGON

(a) *Key signature.*

Come with me now to Judea. The world calls it Aragon, and the Spaniards call that part of it we are now to cross "bajo Aragón—low Aragon." For the state of Aragon, the ancient Christian kingdom, is divisible, not like Gaul, into three, but into two natural parts. The province of Huesca and the greater part of that of Zaragoza sag between the Pyrenees and the high plateau of central Spain, with the Ebro in the trough. This is low Aragon, my Judea. The south-western part of the province of Zaragoza and nearly the whole of the province of Teruél are on the plateau, uplands of thin air, high Aragon. My Judea, then, is the very reverse of Judea, a sagging trough instead of a bulging wave of the land. But to me it is Judea. Why?

Because, when you read this, you are reading not only the account of the journey we made together but also the account of a journey I made with you. I have been making that journey ever since we traversed the Highway into Spain, and my life continually claims from it new and fuller meanings. And so, in bajo Aragón I have found Judea, a land I have never seen, but a land I know; as it is, indeed, a land we all know. But where, in our experience, are we to fix this Judea that we have never seen? I have talked with Australian boys who rode victoriously into Palestine; who saw the Holy Land from the plains beside the sea to the plains of the Abana that encircle Damascus; and I know, as I look out over the empty wastes of Aragon, that Herod once looked out from his fortress, through the anxious morning, over just such a land. I have found my own Judea.

During the six days we were in this Judean country I felt, more strongly, I think, than in any other stage of the journey, what I can only call the power of the land, or the spirit of the land. It communicates itself in the same way as pronounced character in persons: we yield ourselves, either to its strength or its charm. This power, or spirit, or charm of country is always a stronger thing, to me, in lean, gaunt, hard country than it is in the leafy, soft, and thronging lands of the earth. But everywhere it is a power, perhaps a soul, of the landscape itself; not of life as we know life, but of the rocks, the earth; of the hills, and their forms and hues and distances; of the air, the light, and the heat and radiance that are part of them. It is a mirage, an aura, an emanation, that penetrates into life, permeates life, affects it most profoundly. A thing stupendous, yet, by most, ignored.

Organic life is a membrane, a secretion of the earth's crust, rooted in the soil and the waters, fed by the earth's clear blood that oozes from the mountain springs, animated by the temper of the skies, matured by time. It clings like a netted mantle, a membrane shot with veins and nerves and ganglia, the mesh close or open according to the earth's abundance. And where the land is lean its hues are dull, its attenuated tissue resistant, its growth slow, its maturity manywheres deep, wise, and spiritually sensitive. Islam swept from Arabia into the further deserts. Christ arose in Judea. Scandinavia diffused the Nibelungen myth outward through the southern forests.

Let me not pretend that I felt any such power as this in Aragon. And mistake me not when I say that the power of Aragon influenced me more than any other power of this journey—for the inenarrable calm of the Pyrenees, beheld as we beheld them from

Goyrans, was quite another thing, an ecstatic experience of brief duration. A quiet, steady influence reigned in Aragon, came out of the land itself, and I write of it at some length for two reasons.

People are not accustomed to see loveliness in stark, bony wildernesses. They tire, as they consider, of dull monotony, and they forsake it willingly for verdure and softness. But to me there is deeper beauty in a naked land like this one.

And here, in Aragon, we scented for the first time, and more strongly than ever again, that faint aroma that has been wafted down the centuries, like dry fumes of incense borne thinly into the night from a Mass that is over, the devotional spirituality of old Spain. Aragon fought early for the Cross. Aragon struggled, together with Spain, against heresy. The zeal and fanaticism have subsided, the pomp of a grand age has dwindled, but the aroma lingers, a faint perfume in the land. A priestly caste shuffles, black-robed, like the ghost of power, through the mouldering churches of ampler days. It would be easy, too easy, to conclude that the keen, incisive spirit of old Spain has lost vigour, but we know that it has not. Spiritual peace descended long ago on to the land, but there remains in fullest vigour the sport of the people, bull-fighting, deeply rooted in the character of a nation that waged centuries of unremitting war, of a people so thorough in the Holy Inquisition that we ascribe it readily to them alone, think of it, without understanding, as a devilry of Spain. It is the same Spain that faces enraged bulls in the public arena (that same arena of ancient Rome) to-day, for sport.

But in Aragon, we felt this temper in repose. I would like to believe that the early zeal of ancient Aragon was fostered in the life of the land by the land's own power; was a manifestation of the resistant, sensitive strength of the thin membrane of life that adheres to its Judean surface. Perhaps it was so.

And now, this land was amply spread before us.

(*b*) *Los Monegros*

We had climbed up and over the edge of a high plain that spread quietly on either hand like a lake, but fell, to the west, before us, in a gentle, evenly sloping expanse. It fell towards low, brown hills, miles away. It looked flat as a tilted table, a place not bare, for it was covered with poor crops of wheat, but a place where there was room, interval, safety for what stood on its surface. It bore little—an open row of trees to the north-east; a few small stone shacks, far apart; one big and solitary, square, stone farmhouse of two stories, a patriarchal dwelling. And behind us, near the high edge, a white caminero house, the first we had seen for many days. And on the end of that caminero house, the end we saw as we came up over the edge of the plateau, simple black letters a yard high announced the distance to Zaragoza.

Nine kilometres of dwindling road linked us by a ruled line to the hills in front and cut the plateau in two, so that its name, to the right, the north, was, according to the map, the Llano de las Menorcas ; and to the left, the south, the Llanos de Curdiél. Llano, llanos—plains, yet one and the same plain, cut in halves by the sharp, straight thread of the road.

When our eyes had scanned and swept over the spreading wheat as the eyes of sailors examine the monotony of the sea, that no tiny thing may openly hide itself, we discovered, like sailors, the horizon.

Far to the south-west were mysterious hills, with a notch between them, the portal of rocky chasms. We stopped excitedly and set the map with care, to see if it were true. And it was true! There, twenty miles away, the Ebro had torn across and through the hard rocks, to go shining down the opener ravines on its difficult way to the sea. Lighter than smoke were these far hills that pressed the Ebro between them, and flat as a screen of gossamer they hung, deep in their shadows, bold, bald, in the light; yet entirely without mass, and clear in their outline as a far-off, hazy landfall at sea—a sharp, imponderable delicacy.

Thus did the Ebro, and without revealing the glint of its waters, become known, become real to us, where it emerges through the notch in the stubborn, low sierras—for the distant hills, little more than a thousand feet high, are not less mountainous for being low—the Sierra de Valdurrios to the north of the notch, and the Sierra de los Rincones, the "Range of Jutting Rocks," to south.

We knew now, with a certainty so much more convincing than faultless theoretical knowledge, that the road was bearing steadily leftward to bring us beside the Ebro. We could feel the river, as if it were sending a rumble through the ground to our very feet. But a long way off, and the road, for a long way, straight.

Once, we rested on the bisected plain, sitting at the edge of the wheatfield—or was not the whole plain one great wheatfield? There was clover in the grass along the road, and in the crop near us a boy was cutting weeds. When we sat on the ground the sky came near to us, near as the tops of the flat billows of wheat, and we called the place "the Gâtinais." But here, half-way across the wide, tilted bench, we were losing the feeling of height. It no longer seemed high, for to look along the road was to see that we were half way *down*—from where? To where? Simply, half-way down a long, long, gentle slope.

And beside the straight road there were milestones, the first we had seen in Spain. Absurd, back-to-front milestones that told us, as we approached them, how far we had come from the last place, but said how far we had to go to the next place only if we looked back after we had passed them. Secretive milestones—and I knew that Shot would have nothing whatever to do with them: that we would never see him in Spain! Up, then, and on past them again!

On and on, to the bottom, where at last the straight road wavered for a little way between low, open trees. They, these fifteen or twenty poor trees on each side, were just enough to prove to us that the land was without trees, without shade—without them as lonely places are not lonely, until a solitary man be seen, far away.

Aimlessly into the low, neat hills the road led us; into a shallow valley that bore no stream; and we left the wheat behind. The dry, even grass, the smooth shapes of the hills, the prim line of the road, all entered into a conspiracy to pretend that this land was tame, ordered, in some way tended by men. Only the dry ground, the inflammable grass at our feet, told that it was a wild country and unsown. But where, we asked each other, were the streams? For the map showed the blue lines of streams along this, and other valleys of the neighbourhood. But there were no streams. The little valleys were dry, with good soil in their floors, but dry. Yet, the wheat of the plain behind was fairly green, and the roadside weeds and clover there were fresh. Why was this?

Away back, we had climbed a steep front-slope that led us over to a long, gentle back-slope. Front-slopes of that kind (*cuestas* they call them, after the Spanish of America) are marked features of certain landscapes where the rocks lie in layers that are nearly level, and crop out as bands around the hillsides. Usually, there are hard bands and soft bands, rocks that will resist the weather, and rocks that wear quickly, and the long, gentle back-slopes, the sloping table-tops, nearly everywhere represent the hard layers. And through the hard layers the rain-water will not pass quickly or easily. The ground, the rotten rock of their surfaces, may thus hold moisture enough for cultivation.

This, it seems to me, explains the fertility of high, flat places in dry countries, like the broad llanos of wheat behind us here, and like certain olive groves we were to see later. The hills we had entered were carved out of soft, porous rocks, the remnant of a layer that had once extended further east to cover the whole of the llano behind us but had been stripped off during the infinitely long period of weathering that had shaped the landscape. The water must soak rapidly into them to low levels, and their dampness, after rain, must evaporate quickly. Dry, porous, they were, and a meagre support for the grass. Yet it covered them, clothed them with a dingy gentleness. How rapidly the hills closed about us!

At one place we passed by the ruins of a large walled building. The walls, that once surrounded it completely, were built of lumps of gypsum, a substance that always seems to me to be sterile, spiritless, neutral, expressing void aridity. But the building, a brown, mature ruin unencumbered by rubbish and surrounded by smooth, crisp grass, was not uninhabited. Several rooms were occupied, still used, perhaps by a shepherd and his family. It seemed to me to be a relic of the slow travel on ancient roads; all that remained of a venta—an inn—of the days when travellers gathered in the wayside inns at night and long tales were told. A caravanserai of the Kingdom of Aragon. Quickly the hills shut it out.

We had lunch that day under a tree! It was on the edge of a ploughed field in the floor of a valley, one of a row of twisted, courageous olives that gave no shade. But because there was a tree we knew that we must lunch there. Hot, bright, calm. A man ploughing up dry clods in the field. His house, lonely on the hilltop, in front of us. The road empty behind us. Empty, because a solitary mule-cart passed along in a trance of slow silence: because now and then a brown motor bus ran away from its trailing dust-cloud like a thing afraid, and left behind it thinning dust and solidifying silence. And, because bread should not be eaten in the sun, we finished that lunch with bread to spare; and because it was bread, we wrapped it, and carried it onward.

Through the drowsy afternoon, into gentler, lower hills, the grass becoming scantier, the banded rocks beginning to show through, in ashen-coloured layers. In a few places there were mean crops of wheat, strung out along the dry bottoms between the hills, far from houses, far from the homes of men who came so far to till so little. Poor crops, and a lean, precarious harvest; and work in their sowing, in their harvesting, harder than where the earth is rich. These were the crops of a poor, strong folk—of the thin membrane whose fibres are tough. An almost uninhabited land. We passed by a mule-cart, a small, covered waggon labelled "Candasnos"—the last life of the road for the whole of that afternoon. It was the only other thing astir in the open world. Uninhabited land.

And yet, there was no loneliness here, for there was a close intimacy of the hills, an eternity of peace among them, they were so near, so abundant, so simple, so entirely the world. Or is this a delusion of mine? Would I have thought so if you were not walking beside me? If I had been alone there? I think, rather, that they would have embraced me just as closely had I been alone.

We came, at a place where the hills opened out a little, to a kind of linear Stonehenge. Some distance to the left of the road and roughly parallel to it stone posts made of gypsum formed an irregular line as if they marked a trail. They were spaced about the distance apart that I had learnt at school to call "one rod, pole, or perch." Many of the posts had fallen or crumbled and the line was interrupted, but it ran for a long way, in the same general direction as the modern road, the two lines crossing here and there.

We discussed this wonder in quite a lively way, and agreed that it probably marked a mediæval road to Zaragoza; was the old highway belonging to the days of the ruined venta, the caravanserai back yonder, following, perhaps, the line of an ancient, Roman road. We peopled it with knights and squires, merchants and kings and robbers. The closeness of the stones to each other puzzled us and we grew interested in the measures of those days. By pacing we found that the interval was not a perch, but whether greater or less I have forgotten. You suddenly remembered that on old title-deeds for land in Texas, deeds that go back to the Spanish colonial days, distances, lengths, are stated in varas. You could not remember the length of a vara, but we adopted the unit—the posts were, for us, one vara apart.

When we got back to Paris we looked the word up in that thick American dictionary that you always wanted me to accept as an authority on the English language. It said, alas, "1 vara = 2.78 feet." Less than a yard! Well, that's what comes of trying to settle things. It's much better to be indefinite.

But this line of old posts that were *not* one vara apart, was leading us into opener country. The hills had become gentler, seemed lower, because we were climbing to a broad summit, were crossing a big roll of the land. From the top of it we saw Candasnos from afar.

It lay, a mud-brown town clustering about a tall, square tower, in the middle of a hollow plain, and beyond it, five miles beyond it, more low hills to be climbed. We made the gentle descent of two miles into Candasnos thinking of refreshment, of coffee. But the town, singularly neat, openly urban once we had crossed its untidy edge, seemed uninhabited as the sweeping plains around it. Early afternoon, and it presented nothing but the hard surfaces of wide, empty streets, closed windows and doors, and low, anonymous façades, with never a sign to indicate a fonda, a café, a shop. There was not even a roaming animal to be seen. But it felt warmly alive in the bright inundation of detained, late, noonlight. Somewhere inside this place blood was coursing.

At last we saw a woman in a doorway. She pointed to the café—"over there, upstairs." A place without any sign. The room was large, bare, full of warm light and interested people. The patrona was sewing, and her son stood talking to several customers, of whom there were about a dozen. We caused only a momentary stir of distraction and were quickly given our coffee and left in peace.

Two coffees each, we drank there, and then, away from Candasnos, out across the quiet, brown miles. There was no traffic. There were no houses. No trees. Nothing but ourselves in the vacant silence. The plain, the low hills of the distance, and behind us Candasnos, a solitary town. The approaching hills were whiter than those behind, with a hint of underlying rock, a suggestion of little valleys with steep sides with here and there a cliff. In the mouth of just such a valley we found Peñalba.

Peñalba has outskirts—a small cemetery on the plain; a little church, very new and very white, perched on the edge of a bluff on the far side of the valley; a desolation of small industry, scars of excavation, and kilns or ovens for baking bricks. But the town itself, wedged like a stopper in the mouth of the valley, was poor, small, and squalid. The houses, like those of Candasnos, were low, but much smaller, and the whole aspect and feeling of the place were those of a poor, workmen's suburb of a town. This little place felt as if it were inhabited by people not of the soil nor of the pastures, but of the factory and the mill. Up the valley, according to the map, there are quarries, the Canteras del Manco, and my belief is that the men of Peñalba are makers of bricks and hewers of soft sandstone for the roads—recruits, the younger men, for our familiar caminero houses. The only thing of attractive interest that we saw in the dry little place was a bright automobile in trouble—en panne, as the French say: "hove to."

The road led us across, not up the valley, and the valley, in spite of its business-like appearance, bore no stream. We were quickly in the hills again, and the day was getting rapidly cooler, with a threat of impending rain. Half-way up a long slope we rested and you ate the remainder of the bread.

I still experience an odd feeling of mild anxiety when I think of that evening. It seems groundless, and is concerned mainly with time. It was getting late when you ate that bread, and there was still a long way to go. We had passed through Candasnos at about four o'clock, Peñalba at six; it was now about seven, cold, and threatening to rain. Silly thoughts ran through my head—"late—rain—long way yet—provisionless—uninhabited country." The evening was bright still, for we were on Summer time and the sun had not set; but this mild anxiety, which did not then express itself clearly to me, was the real reason, I think, why I did not share the bread with you. I was as hungry as you were, and dinner was at least two hours off, but I said "No thanks. You eat it if you want it," and I underlined the last phrase, mentally! You ate it—all. Absurd, isn't it?

From the top of that slope we saw, at last, our destination. Bujaraloz, lonely and afar, like Candasnos, very like Candasnos, a brown cluster in an empty, brown plain, but a cluster from which rose two brown towers. And here, too, there was more than a simplicity of bounding hills. Here were expanding distances and in the north, fifteen miles away, the eastern end of a range of stony mountains, the Sierra de Alcubierre.

The sierra, which is about twenty-five miles long, is an important range, for it runs like a vertebral partition, midway down the trough of bajo Aragón and separates the region of Zaragoza from the region of Huesca; is, indeed, part of the boundary between the provinces of those names. It was, for us, the landmark, and a truly Judean one, of two days. In the lower clarity of this overcast evening it was ponderously dark, massive, blue-black in the distance; towering rock of nobly crested line—the Corinthian story of a Doric foreground. For there was a majesty of the unadorned here: Bujaraloz, solid and perfectly plain, at the feet of its plain, square towers, the centre of a void expanse; bare hills against the sky; and the far sierra, sharply lined—monochrome in still silence.

Descending, we passed from the province of Huesca into that of Zaragoza, with nothing but the flat summit of the ridge behind us to indicate a boundary. And, descending, we saw Bujaraloz dwindle in stature while its towers appeared to rise higher and higher into the sky. In that long approach of two miles or more over the flat ground we came to recognise the sprawling flatness of these Aragonese towns, Bujaraloz and Candasnos, for something new, utterly different from the high-piled compactness of a Fraga, a Cubélls; a flatness of the Oriental, Moslem world replacing the Latin tallness; and Moslem sobriety of hue replacing the Provençal gaiety of Catalonian paint.

The edge of Bujaraloz was garish. The cemetery, and a small, new chapel that was mean and modern, vulgar and harsh, stood far out from the town. Closer in were muddy ponds, evidence, perhaps, of brick-making. Once past the first building, which happened to be the Casa cuartél of the Guardia civil—the Gendarmerie—we were in urban surroundings very like Candasnos. But in Bujaraloz the time of day had brought life to the surface. People were sitting in the open doorways, and many children were playing along the streets. Almost at the first house we passed by an old man and three women at a doorway who looked at us with open interest. We liked that. Fifty yards further on we turned and went back to them, for there were no signs on the buildings. They were very pleasant to us and pointed out the fonda, down near the turning of the street and nearly opposite the big church.

This fonda, a low, two-storied building, was a new kind of establishment to us. A long, dingy sign above the massive, nail-studded door, called it not a fonda, but a casa de huéspedes—something a little more intimate, more—yes, genteel is the word: a "guest house." We were received by the patrona herself, a handsome woman of about forty, very well dressed in simple black. By a subtle reaction to impression she quickly became, for both of us, not the patrona, but the señora, though you discovered that she was really a señorita—it is the kind of discovery you make. This amiable woman seemed, in the surroundings of Bujaraloz, to be a creature of a superior order, but she represents, to judge from Spanish books, a type that is far from rare in the country towns of Spain. Her quiet poise, her lazy grace and soft movement, her excellent figure, her regular, contented features and good colour, made her presence, to me, a most restful one, a presence of placid mild intelligence.

In spite of the lazy air of the casa de huéspedes, our business arrangements were quickly made and no time was wasted—time, indeed, was filled. We were offered refreshment which we accepted, vino tinto—red wine, and biscuits. I infringed on the rules of local etiquette by taking the plate, as the biscuits were passed to me, but the señora explained quietly that the guest was to take one, or several, biscuits, but not the plate. It was not a rebuke at all, but merely the initiation of a stranger into "the ways," and we laughed over it without embarrassment. During the courtesies, everybody in the house came in to see us, inspect us, question us. There were two lively maids, prepossessing girls who were full of eager, natural fun. There was the young schoolmaster, who lodged at the casa. And a frowsy old woman, who seemed to be an intruder and was plainly ignored, stood apart, in inquisitive silence. We explained ourselves, and aroused great interest. The maids showed that same dignified independence and sense of their equality with everyone else that we had noticed in other places, and were, indeed, very nice girls. The schoolmaster did *not* show his learning. And the señora was quite content to sit back and let the others draw from us the information we had to give. How thoroughly at ease we felt among these pleasant people!

When we had finished our wine they all took us upstairs to show us our room, the señora in the lead, the girls chattering with us, and the frowsy old woman in the rear. It was obviously the best room in the house, the "first floor front" (the second floor, in American), large, with two beds in separate alcoves, and an extraordinary number of mid-Victorian chairs and a bureau to match them, ranged against the walls. There was at least a dozen of those chairs, and on one bed, your bed, was what looked like a small black coffin. Would the room do? they asked. Of course it would do! A heavily stylish room, and our own appearance little in keeping with it.

The frowsy old woman was examining everything but us. She seemed to be making notes of the quality of every article, for future gossipings. She cast wistful eyes at the drawers of the bureau, at the "coffin," and looked as if her fingers were itching to turn down the bedclothes and to feel the heavy curtains of the alcoves and windows. We knew her well—an eternal type—the old woman of Bujaraloz who had been consumed for years by a curiosity to know just what was upstairs in that house but had never before been allowed upstairs. We, strangers of a kind so uncommon that we engrossed the interest of the household, were the providential, involuntary agents of her success. At last her curiosity was appeased.

We asked at what time we might have dinner, hora oficial or hora verdadera, Summer time or true time, and said that when we had washed we would go out for a short walk. Our escort withdrew politely, the señora leading, the old woman again in the rear, the latter to vanish completely, for we saw her no more. But she had bewitched us.

The "coffin"! We opened it. Clothes—full of clothes, women's clothes, gay ones. The bureau! The drawers were full of bills and accounts, many of them for the newspaper, and made out in the name of Rosas. Shocking behaviour for two foreign gentlemen who had been accepted by innocent women on trust! And in "my Judea," too. Fortunately, the police and the padre lived in the house, as we discovered later. But, does everybody pry, given the chance? It would be comforting to think so.

We removed the "coffin" from the bed and placed it on a catafalque made of two neighbouring chairs. And those chairs! Their haughty stiffness and disdain! Furniture that falls into disuse dies, as surely as persons die; but these chairs emphatically were not dead. But neither were they used.

Suddenly I understood them. Were one of us to wake up during the night he would see, on each of those chairs, a ghostly occupant, mute, but staring in motionless protest. Phantoms of the first twelve people who had occupied that room two hundred years before, in days when, if a traveller had but one suit, it would certainly be a brave one. Phantoms, protesting that we were no fit successors to the rank and fashion that once tarried in Bujaraloz. Phantoms, who, seeing one of us properly awake, would rise, and together point phosphorescent fingers towards our heaps of shabby clothes. And the clothes, garment by garment, would smoulder and be consumed! Most uncomfortable. Most embarrassing. Luckily, the coffin was full of clothes, girls' clothes that might not fit.

Of course, the simple way to outwit spectral visitors would be to turn all the chairs to face the wall. And a simpler way still would be to stay sound asleep. I do not mind hobgoblins, but I have a particular dread of phantoms—they make me feel so insignificant and so guilty. And those chairs held a foreboding. Somebody was "in for something," deserved something. Which of us? Then, too, we had been bewitched, and had dishonourably looked into private places. It was disconcerting, and the only way to restore confidence in ourselves was to go for a walk.

I bought cigarettes—of the *Arrendataría* brand, with the ends tucked in: and I reflected that the only drawback to a vice is the martyrdom one suffers when unable to indulge it properly. But Bujaraloz was not to be blamed for the cigarettes, and it proved to be a substantial town with some pleasing buildings of brown stone. The church was big, austere, cold, and closed. We found a large square, and discovered bells in odd places, one over an arch on one side of the square, another in a niche on the corner of a building, and still others in places where bells ought to be—in belfries. Evidently the place had once had need of sounding its alarms vigorously.

Small boys were disposed to follow us, so we wandered far out of town, which discouraged them. We sat down on a clay-bank by a muddy pond, which discouraged them completely. The frogs had business in the pond that evening, for numbers of expeditionary frogs were converging towards it from many directions, while other, ceremonial frogs leapt from the pond and sped to meet the more important dignitaries of the assembling hosts. Indeed, so many frogs plopped into the pond while we were there, that the tide should have risen at least several inches. As it failed to do so I am forced to conclude that the pond is in subterranean communication with other ponds we had seen in the neighbourhood. I thought the concentration must have been planned for a census of frogs, but you surmised that it was more probably saturnalian in purpose. Perhaps you were right. But, as whatever was happening was proceeding under water (how uncomfortable!) we found it rather uninteresting and went back to town. Moreover, so much of this paragraph is manifest lying, that I think we should go back to town, go, retrospectively, back to dinner at once.

Dinner was just ready.

We sat, intimately, at a round table, the padre, two officers of the Guardia civil, you, and I. This was evidently the way of a casa de huéspedes; the guests were a kind of family. Eggs were the first course, served in British egg-cups, but so lightly boiled that we had difficulty in eating them. *Huevos pasados por agua* they were called —*passé par l'eau*, as they say in France—merely "passed through the water," and so quickly that they had no more time than to get hot all through. We watched the fat, jovial officer of the civil guard, and learnt that the way to consume such an egg is to remove the top, "season to taste," then pick it up, and *drink* the contents! The lesson served to start conversation, and most entertaining fellows they proved to be, those two young officers of the guard.

They were very different. Both wore their grey-blue uniforms with an air of smartness that seems natural to all uniformed persons of rank in Spain, though not to private soldiers or policemen. The fat fellow, the elder, whom we thought to be the superior in rank, was a healthy, good-tempered person of the kind that accepts all things as they come. He accepted us, in an amused, though quite inoffensive way. The younger, small and slight in build, his curious dark pallor emphasised by a neat, black moustache, was vehement, assertive, yet aristocratic in his manner; a vain young man, with much to learn, trying to give us the impression that he was the senior in rank. We liked them both, and were soon in lively discussion.

The padre, a lean, sallow, middle-aged man with prominent eyes that were anything but clear, sat back when not eating, and spoke only when addressed, and then only in short, gruff phrases. He seemed not merely to believe himself a person apart, but actually to be apart, a member of an aloof caste, insulated from us by the wrappings of his long, second-best soutane. We formed a poor opinion of him, found him to be a slack, second-rate individual, though by no means disagreeable, for the marks of his education and training were not unapparent.

Indeed, life in a small and lonely country-town like Bujaraloz may well be so stagnant; a man of ability may find himself so wasted in such a place; that perfunctory, uneventful decades there might easily deaden a finer intellect than that of the padre. This may be unfair to Bujaraloz, but what do such communities offer to intellectual people anywhere—in England, America, Australia?

The vigour of conversation withdrew our attention from the meal, and we ate mechanically. We talked much about talking Spanish, and about the Spanish language, and heard, from the young men, that the best Castilian is spoken at Burgos, which we already knew; and that the best Catalán is spoken at Lérida, which we did not know. We talked of the geography and the cities of Spain, learning that Murcía is a much bigger and more important place than we had thought, equal to Seville and Valladolid in status.

I decided that this was the opportunity to test something that had worried us a great deal in France, and asked the elder guardia if there were anything in our appearance that should cause people to mistrust or suspect us. He assured us jovially that we looked, from his professional point of view, like innocent and decent people. "Why, then," I asked him, "do some people decline to believe our account of ourselves? Why should we be asked if we are spies?"

And we told him of Pilar. His answer was an odd one. We might expect many questions of that kind, "porque los españoles son muy curiosos—because the Spaniards are very inquisitive." We found them, I think, far less so than their neighbours across the Pyrenees, and not nearly so suspicious. To what gendarmes could we have talked as we were talking to these guardias?

Our journey led them to accounts of other people who had walked along the main road to Madrid. We were somewhat disappointed to hear that there were such other people, but the guardia told us of a young Czec who had only recently passed through. He was walking around the world for a wager, supporting himself by selling postcards, and had learnt to speak very fair Spanish in the bare time it had taken him to reach Bujaraloz from Barcelona. How we detested—and suspected—that Czec! "But," said the guardia, "That's an explanation people would easily understand. If they ask you why you're doing it, say 'es un sporto'—for sport!"

Yes. Conversation quite withdrew our attention from the meal, until the grilled lamb chops appeared. Not only did they touch my Australian heart because they were just unadorned, grilled lamb chops, but I had to admit that not even Australia had ever offered me such chops. They were fit to appear on the same table as Pilar's almonds, they were so tender, and so perfectly grilled. For perfection they lacked only pepper, but pepper, in the Spain that we came to know, does not exist. Were it not for such repasts as the lunch bought at Alcarráz, I would say, whenever I think of those chops of Bujaraloz, what Richard Cary, Earl of Monmouth, said: "... all the time I was in Spain I had such a stomach to my meat as in my younger days I never knew the like." Spain still merited this compliment of 1623, sturdier praise than we of 1926 knew how to utter.

But the chops passed, and something else came. We resumed conversation, and we made the padre talk, by asking him questions. He had no objection to answering them, and gave us, on request, quite a good lesson on the forms of address that should be used when speaking to members of the priesthood. But I have forgotten it all, for we seldom had occasion to address the priesthood. What I have not forgotten is his statement that he was not alone in the parish. He had a subordinate, and we concluded that the subordinate did most of the work.

After dinner we all assembled in the kitchen to smoke by the fire. It was a most inviting kitchen, clean, bare, and warm, with wooden chairs, a wooden floor scrubbed spotless, and a low, jutting fireplace with ingle seats, above which hung the great cowl of the chimney. The women moved from the ingle seats to chairs to let us men sit close to the fire, as if that were the custom. They told us that the whole dinner had been cooked over the tiny, open fire of pine twigs on the low hearth, and we wondered how it could possibly have been done, but the coffee was there, standing at the edge of the fire, as a remaining piece of evidence.

Coffee was served. We smoked our cigarettes. And all—except the padre, who spat from time to time on the clean floor (which caused no remark), and the señora, who smiled indulgently in the background—entered into a lively, bantering conversation with the maids. It was very jolly, but we were too tired to stay for long. We had done our forty-six kilometres in eleven hours, two of those hours being absorbed by lunch and afternoon coffee—a steady pace and a long day. So we took our brass candlesticks and said good night.

I could not sleep. Hours passed, and it rained, a heavy downpour that changed into a swelling and diminishing drizzle. Hours. Hours. In an interval of silence, when the rain had softened for a while into nothing, a boy passed along the dead street singing gaily, pouring out the song unrestrained as he went through the shuttered, empty night. A strong, happy boy going home. A boy who had, no doubt, been courting. A boy who knew that life is to be lived with such vigour as his footsteps told. The song died away, swallowed by the turning streets. The rain closed in and smothered the night. I struck a match, looked at my watch—3 a.m. And more hours, the rain slowly smothering them.

At the customary time in the morning I woke up automatically, and called at once to you, told you that we could not proceed from Bujaraloz that day.

The chairs had been right—they had held a foreboding. The very frogs had been right—they had understood the immediate future. I had been right myself! My anxiety of the last evening, along the road near Peñalba, was, really, well grounded. I can recover it, when I think of that part of the journey, as "a feeling related mainly to time." But it has roots deeper in the unconscious. My body, which then felt quite well, was trying to inform me that it was about to be ill. And it knew why, though I did not. At Peñalba it had already begun to react to the rapidly increasing humidity, to the coming rain, and here I was, in bed in Bujaraloz, my chest cramped and tight, aching with dry pleurisy; myself exhausted as a person who has been beaten with rods, and unable to find comfort in any position for more than ten minutes—my familiar demon again!

I had feared this from the very beginning, from the moment when our plan was formed in Paris—feared that my chest might seriously hamper the project. I had expected inevitable trouble in the Pyrenees but had escaped it. I had expected it for so long that, in the healthy zest of our progress, I had nearly forgotten the threat of weather. But there would be no moving to-day. To-morrow, perhaps. Given a steady, or a *slowly* changing barometer, we might proceed to-morrow.

I sent you with brutally definite instructions to the household. You were to announce that I was ill and would remain in bed; that it was due to an *herida de guerra* (we got that from the dictionary) —a war wound—and was nothing to cause alarm; that I would require nothing to eat until I should ask for it, but would like much coffee all day; and, most important, that I wished to be left alone.

You must have carried out this mission well. For whenever I think of that wretched day, the only one lost through illness over the entire journey, I offer up silent thanks for the goodness of those fine, Spanish people, and for their thorough respect of my wishes.

Had it happened in France (I cannot help saying it) Madame, sweeping all opposition aside, would have bustled into the room followed by all the maids. She would have been voluble and inquisitive; would have put many circuitous questions to find out just where the herida de guerra was; would have expressed a loud sympathy—calculating, all the time, whether the "case" would be likely to embarrass the household or not. But why be mean? I have, at times, had very generous treatment in France, and possibly you did not a little to shield me from Spanish curiosity.

I was left the whole day in peace, and to be left in peace when ill is the one thing for which I always ask but am seldom granted.

Most men seem to understand such a request, but most women, except those who are professional nurses, do not. They feel that they must be "doing something," and they exasperate the unfortunate patient with incessant attention, and if he resist it they get "hurt," which makes him feel that he has behaved like a peevish child.

It rained all day, in a fitful drizzle. You came and went silently, bringing hot coffee and removing the empty glasses. And you refrained mercifully from talking. You sat by the window and read the pocket Browning, which was, I think, the only time that little book was opened during the journey. (Poetry and fresh air, it seems, do not go together, in the twentieth century). You went for a muddy walk between the showers in the afternoon, and, altogether, it must have been a most tiresome day for you.

Don't think that I felt any such consideration at the time! I was far too concerned with my own aches and pains to care whether you were bored or not. But you were bored, weren't you?

There were certain entertainments in the kitchen that were surely far from displeasing to you, but they could not have made up for a day on the road. The officers of the guardia, for instance, let you examine their swords, bright blades from Toledo with the dates of manufacture engraved on them.

And from these same officers you learnt, by simple observation, how to make Arrendataría cigarettes fit to smoke. The guardias pulled the ends of the paper out, then, placing a new cigarette paper along the cigarette itself, they rolled the tobacco from its own into the new paper with one movement, so that the old paper fell to the floor! You studied the matter on my behalf and your explanation was quite clear. I could see exactly how it was done, but do it? Never! It looks as simple as rolling a blind but when I tried it the tobacco, and not the old paper, was what fell to the floor! I have not the gift of knack, in other than esoteric things, like determining ferrous iron in silicates.

One of the girls was engaged to be married so they betrothed you temporarily to the other one—which reminds me that you received an offer of marriage from another most winsome girl, in the train near Avila, after this journey was over; and I wondered, when such mischievous gaiety was in the air, why it was that the lively, handsome girls of Spain looked on me with a less embracing approval. Too old. "Interesting" to women, but no longer to girls. There was other company in the kitchen that day, too. People whom I did not see, and you reported that the padre sat there by the fire all day.

Towards evening you were able to tell the señora that I was feeling much better. At once you brought back their request that they might see me, and they came, the señora and the two maids, to pay a formal visit that filled the dull room with life. Had I suffered much? they asked. Would I really be able to go to-morrow? And, above all, what could they do for me? I returned the courtesies, and said that to-morrow we must walk thirty-seven and a half kilometres, nearly twenty-four miles, and, as I was fasting to-day, I would like to set out to-morrow after a more sustaining breakfast than is usually eaten in Spain. The three women conferred and then asked if a breakfast of soup, eggs ("*pasados por agua*"), toast, and coffee, would be satisfactory. It would. The señora then withdrew, and left the girls with us.

The one who was engaged was feeling very light-hearted. She told us that the boy lived in another town, that the wedding was to be in a month, and asked if we would like to see the wedding dress. Your eyes kindled with an interest in clothes, and an interest in the moods and behaviour of people. Out came the wedding dress, bodices, skirts, underskirts, petticoats, from the coffin! The girl held them to her figure, garment after garment, prettily made things like the peasant costume of Fraga, but in tones of dull, rich red and maroon. The way you examined the stuffs and studied the cut pleased her greatly and she chattered and laughed as she put them carefully away again.

To me these clothes and the girl, as I imagined her wearing them, stood in perfect harmony against the background of this town, these open, sweeping plains; rich, warm colours, that were not bright nor gay; warm, lively character, that was not florid nor shallow, set in bare, monochrome expanses: the kind of intensity natural to such a land.

The girls went, and the cold, shadowless dusk drew in, slowly. We lit the candles, talked. You went to dinner, returned: and the emptiness of long hours filled, slowly. Night, and bedtime—for you.

In the morning I was all right, my chest elastic and painless, and the day promised a clear sky. We went down to eat breakfast by the kitchen fire, and it startled me to find myself an object of concern to the guardias, the schoolmaster, even the padre. I had to assure them that I was well enough to set out, and, indeed, I felt so well that before these two smart, brisk young officers I had a vague sense of embarrassment, as if I had been malingering and knew that I did not deserve their genuine solicitude. But the guardias had to report at the casa cuartél, so they said good-bye. The padre remained, in his warm corner near the fire.

Sitting opposite him, we watched the "engaged" girl cooking our breakfast on the low fire of twigs. The fire itself was no mere thing to be taken for granted. Where, on these plains that were naked for twenty open miles around, did they get wood to burn? We asked, and were told that the "wood" was pino de las montañas—pine from the mountains—an answer that was not very informing. But the map indicated that there was timber of a sort on all the remote, rugged highlands of the region, areas marked pinares—pine groves—which did not betray themselves in the scenery. The fire rested on a plate of beaten iron which covered the hearth, and behind it was a tall screen of beaten iron, plainly ornamented, and bearing the inscription JOSÉ ROSAS, 1844. Who was José Rosas, who added this improvement? The father, or perhaps the grandfather of the señorita? Over the fire this morning was a grating of light bars on low legs, to support the pots and kettles. The coffee urn was on the hearth just within the edge of the fire, and it kept hot, when drawn aside, on account of the conductivity of the iron plate. When the eggs were pasados, and the toast made, the grating was removed, and the girl said that she would make the soup. A quaint operation!

While the water was coming to the boil in a metal pot placed among the cinders, she proceeded to fry lumps of bread and chips of garlic in olive oil, in a frying pan that stood clear of the fire on three light, springy legs. When done, the bread and garlic were transferred to the boiling water, and the soup was made.

With her arms akimbo, she watched me eat—drink?—it, and when I had finished, she asked, somewhat doubtfully, "Le gustan las sopas?"—Well, do you like the soup?" (Soup is evidently plural in Bujaraloz.) I answered, quite truthfully, that I did. Notwithstanding the simplicity and "low calorific value" of the ingredients, it tasted good enough to be described by that useful English comparative term "not bad." Unfortunately, it was not sustaining, but we had had eggs, toast, coffee—far more than we had eaten for breakfast at any time during recent months. And this breakfast was a special order on the household, for which recognition was due.

These people understood, in a most natural way, that, once free to depart, we did not want to waste time in idle formalities. Our bill was ready, a reasonable bill of twenty-five pesetas, and we left, after appreciative farewells that made me feel as one does when good friends wave from the platform until the train disappears. It was half-past eight, but there was lunch yet to be bought.

We were able to get everything we wanted, including wine and cigarettes and the novel dessert of crystallised fruit, at the grocery store, where the serious, obliging woman washed our canettes before filling them. I bought a packet of cigarette paper, in order to practise that easy trick of rolling cigarettes into new paper. The action was unwise, but no minor failure could have jeopardised such a day as this was to be.

While we were in the store another woman came in, with a tiny girl who had a band of flannel around her throat. The small daughter of the grocery-señora sped from behind the counter with a cry of glee and embraced the silent little girl who had come in. "Ah! Conchita! Estás mejor?—Why, it's Conchita! Are you better, dear?" And that, we thought, was something very good to hear at a quarter to nine in the morning. When we left, Conchita was telling her playmate all about it.

We walked out of Bujaraloz speculating about the life of such places. What is there for people to do, in such towns? Can other, neighbouring towns offer any attraction? But other towns were far away, and small. We could see the nearest of them now, la Almoda, eight kilometres off to the north, and a mere village compared with Bujaraloz. City life, the distractions of cities, are quite inaccessible to people in these lonely places. And yet, Bujaraloz, Candasnos, had

The lineaments of satisfied desire,

a look of contentment, and in them we met none but contented people, even to the padre, who loved the fire like a cat. The mystery is not one for an American, still less for an Australian, to solve—but it left me uncomfortable, aware that, in embracing a complex, urban existence, there has been a serious forfeiture. Simple minds in lonely places have ways of entertaining themselves. The excitements, which we of the towns have come to look upon as necessary entertainment, no doubt seem better, and the simple minds of lonely places are just as eager to experience them as we are, but they have nearly killed the art—and the joy—of conversation, except in the Latin countries.

But we were clear of the town, clearer still of towns, cities, and the straight road was lined for some distance with struggling poles of trees. Here and there among them was an old but small locust, almost a dwarf. But they came to an end, the straight road rising, gently, slowly, ourselves lifted higher and higher into the superb morning. It was the first of May, bright with promise, in the wastes of Aragon. Paris lay submerged at the end of six hundred miles behind us. Madrid was rising, three hundred and ten miles ahead.

We were closer now to the eastern end of the Sierra de Alcubierre, as close as we were to approach it, and were already receding from it, towards the Ebro.

The mountains, this morning, were utterly different from the dark masses they had been the evening before last. They shimmered in the distant air now, light and powdery, buff and stone-yellow, with here and there the hard glint of a great surface of rock, naked and steep. Ten miles away to the north, but clear, delicately notched, remotely rugged, in a light that plucked sharp lines and edges to make them twang and resound, the mountains this morning displayed their acute, lustreless gems—a far town under the cliffs, Castejón de Monegros, and above it, perched on a high ledge, a castle, Herod's fortress.

But we had risen into low hills, and the sierra sank behind them. There were patches of dwarf pine here, twisted little trees three or four feet high, and we surmised that these hills were the "mountains" from which Bujaraloz gets its firewood. The Monte de la Retuerta de Pina, the map calls the place, "Pinetwist Mountain." But the supply of wood was altogether too meagre to be of value even to a village, and Bujaraloz, I think, has to send to greater distances for its firewood. We were also, according to the map, in the head of a valley, the Gelsa valley, pointing west and then southwest to the Ebro, but waterless. It was not really a valley but a flat hollow, with a little cultivation of the floor in some places. There was a lean pasture of grass in these hills, and we saw more than one flock of sheep browsing far from the road, but never a house, a tree, nor a sign of traffic.

Yet even in so lonely a place traffic passed, and could bring fatality. By the roadside was a cross, a memorial to a boy from Gelsa who was killed here in a road accident. It reminded us of a cross to the memory of a girl, away back in France, near St. Pierre, passed on that long day between Montauban and Toulouse.

Not far past the cross to the Gelsa boy was a turn-off to Gelsa itself, fourteen kilometres away, on the bank of the Ebro. Closer and closer we were coming to the river. There was a side road to it from Candasnos, of forty-two kilometres; there was one from Bujaraloz, of thirty; and now, only fourteen. To-day we would reach it.

Colour had been fading gradually out of the world. From the painted rocks and grassy hills of Fraga; from the dull green plateau of wheat; the dry, brown grass, and ashen rocks of Candasnos; from the creamy cliffs of Peñalba, we had come to hard, bare earth that showed between the low thyme bushes. They were mere inches in height, those thyme bushes, and many inches apart, but they were enough to make the hills look grassy, lichen-grey-green, dull, bare without nakedness. A long, long way, we were, from the singing colour, the mauve and magenta of the sierras of Monsech and Cadi; from the poppies of the upper Segre. Judea, here, sterile and treeless, yet lovely in form and line.

The whole of this region between the Sierra de Alcubierre and the Ebro, from Zaragoza to the Cinca, is so "stamped with an aspect of unity" that the people have given it a name—los Monegros, one of those old noms de pays that are so common in France. Its beauty is the sweeping, slow beauty of line and surface and form, the faithful beauty that remains before the traveller for long hours, changing but slowly. Broad, shelving ledges, bare hills, round hills, and sweeping hills; low lines and pure curves trailing like the tails of comets; and stony mountains afar—these are los Monegros, and they spread under the cloudless day, warm in an exhilaration of clear light, and charmed into silence, for everywhere there is quietness.

The calm towns of the shepherds lie far apart, still, contented. The very air is still, and the centre of all life is one's own heart.

In this warm place, where the world had only an exterior, we scanned the distances for a place of shelter for lunch. There was none, so we sat down where we were at the moment, on the hard, bare ground beside the road, among the little thyme bushes. The air was not hot, though comfortably warm, but the ground was hot, and the only shade for bread, sardines, cheese, was that of our packs. We spent little time over that lunch in the open, and when we left the place the ants were feasting on the sticky remains of crystallised fruit.

The road of the early afternoon wound thirstily among the embossed hills. We had left the flat, Gelsa hollow and were filing through other wide hollows and quite early we came to the expected, white caminero house. Expected, because we understood, now, that caminero houses are built in the wastes. It was inhabited, or at least tenanted, by a pleasant, middle-aged woman. She brought us cool water in a stone crock and we drank. Did she accept our money? I don't remember. But, on our question, she pointed across the road to a place half a kilometre away where there was a spring, a well. The water came from there.

She told us, too, of the Czec globe-trotter. He had passed that way and had stopped, like us, to drink. He said that he was supporting himself by the sale of post-cards, portraits of himself, that being one of the conditions of his wager. He gave her one, which she showed us. An athletic young man, but we suspected him more strongly than ever now, for this traffic in post-cards would not support a man—our own, small, daily bills would represent incredible numbers of post-cards! Truth to say, we were jealous of the Czec. But, "Adiós, señora! The distance ahead is long and the day past noon. We will leave you, the solitary inhabitant of a bare world."

On we go, past one brown, wayside stone every ten minutes, and past one great pedestal of stone every two hours! Myriametre stones, the latter, ten kilometres apart, things encouraging to see in so empty a land. Stout, they were, and stout feels the heart that can count them, four, five, six in a day.

As we were nearing the second of these great stones beyond the caminero house, I noticed, projecting from behind it, a foot, part of a leg, that was almost at once withdrawn, as if its owner believed himself to be quite hidden from us. I thought I recognised that assured, self-confident foot, but I said nothing about it to you. And the moment we came abreast of the stone out stepped the well-known figure of THE DIRECTOR, well known to me, but unknown to you, and on this occasion, it seemed, quite invisible to you. For you walked along in silence, as if we were in different worlds.

"Hello, old scout!" said the director, with a jolly smile on his round, clean-shaven face, and making a kind of salute with his right hand.

"Hello!" I answered, as he fell into step beside me. "What are you doing here? I thought South America was more in your line."

"*Hispanic* America," he corrected.

"All right. Hispanic America. But what are you doing here, anyway?"

"I'm here to see *you*, of course."

"About what?"

"About this journey, expedition, or whatever it is, that you're making. We're looking forward to the results, and I want to remind you that your notes on this particular part of the country may help us in solving a difficulty."

"Notes? I've hardly taken a note since we left Paris!"

"Not taking notes! Why, Aurousseau, think of the opportunity you're losing!"

"I don't think many opportunities are being lost."

"Absolutely lost, if you don't take the trouble to record what you see!"

"Well, what do you want me to do here?"

"I want you to study the drainage. As you know, we've had some difficulty in representing intermittent drainage on maps. What, for instance, does 'intermittent' mean? How distinguish, on the map, between a stream that is only dry in Midsummer and one that only flows after short heavy downpours that are quite infrequent? Besides, many streams that are considered to be perennial may run dry in exceptionally dry years."

"And if you represent them all by the same kind of broken line?"

"Exactly—it's misleading."

"Then use different kinds of broken lines."

"Very simple. But what differences are different kinds of broken lines to stand for? Now, you have a chance of setting the matter right, if you keep your eyes open on this expedition you're making. You must have observed nearly every known type of drainage already, between Paris and here. Think over how you'd put it all on a map correctly. Why, take the map you're using—I'd have thought you'd have chosen a better map than that!—It's deceived you. It shows a number of full lines here, and they led you to expect streams. But there aren't any streams!"

"I've been thinking that over. It did deceive me for a while, because I'd been thinking conventionally, in terms of full and broken lines. But this little map that you scorn, tells the truth. It's all in the names."

"How so?"

"Look at them! If there's water, the map says *rio*—Rio Ebro, Rio Cinca; but if there's no water, it says *val*—Val de Castejón, Val de Gelsa; and, better still, if the dry *val* is deep and narrow, it says not *val*, but *barranco*. The names tell exactly what to expect. Isn't that a way out—as good a way as using different kinds of lines?"

"Um. It might be all right in Spanish, because the language is rich in topographical terms. But what about English?"

"I think you'll find it all right in the language of any people who know their country. Why, in Australia we have a word for a dry stream. We call it a *watercourse*. And we have other words, like *creek*, and *billabong*, to express different kinds of streams. Don't they call a dry stream a *sluit*, or a *sloot*, in South Africa? And haven't the Mohammedans appropriate words like *oued*, or *wadi*? The words exist, and are only waiting to be used. Why substitute symbols for live words?"

"The symbols have the advantage of being international, you know."

"And meanwhile, they kill the words. Where have all the beautiful descriptive English words gone to, in America? *Runnel*, *rill*, *brook*, *stream*, *waterway* and all the expressive diminutives? They've all been drowned in *river*, all except *creek*. Yet, in France, even *rivière* and *fleuve*; in Germany *Fluss* and *Ström*, are names reserved for different things."

"And so, Aurousseau, you'd have us all become linguists in order to read maps."

"I'd not even have maps, if I could get on without them."

"Nonsense! You're only posing when you talk like that! You know very well that you're still obsessed by geography."

"Obsessed? Hardly! The geographical habit of mind is most likely part of me, by now. But obsessed! Anyway, it'd be quite a respectable obsession: better than some."

"Such as?"

"Oh, one might be less fortunately obsessed—by ideas of communism, kleptomania, or women, for instance."

"But surely, the last—occasionally?"

"Oh, quite often, I assure you. But one doesn't necessarily *talk* about it, you know. You ought to understand. You've been on—er, expeditions, yourself. Attractive women obsess me more than geography. I believe there's one coming now, so you'd better go. I'll think over that matter of conventional signs for intermittent drainage sometime. So long!"

I looked behind me, and when I turned around again he was gone! You were still there, striding along, with your head thrust a little forward, your eyes roaming over everything and taking notes for you that you would read later; but you yourself were in some place that was not Spain; and when you go away like that, I know that you are not to be called back—know that you desire silence. A simple gift, that few bestow when it is needed.

But that afternoon I was being entertained. Why had I looked back and so missed the dematerialisation of the director? Because I could hear, on the road behind us, an approaching tinkle of jigging bells and a light patter of ambling hoofs. And I knew her at once, even in the distance, though I had never seen her before!

It was SANCHO PANZA'S DUCHESS, mounted on what Sancho might have described as "a milk-white belfry," and on this occasion it would have been but a slight misnomer. For her proud little pony ("Palfrey, Sancho, palfrey!") was caparisoned with green leather trappings all hung with tiny silver bells. Their shaken rhythm stopped, as the duchess reined the pony into a walk beside me, and the jigging music became a casual tinkle that splashed now and then like a jumping fish whenever the pony stretched his neck, shook his head, and sent short, rough blasts through his nostrils.

The duchess herself was a captivating person with the face of a Madonna and the eyes of a popular comedy actress. She was dressed all in green, with white and silver trimmings; a tight bodice with a wide flounce below the waist, and a soft ruffle of white lace around the neck; a long and very full skirt banded with silver embroidery; and a peep of white hose above a green shoe with a silver buckle—so much I saw as she rode up, but I was on the off-side as we walked, and safe from the temptation to play with a small foot and a small silver stirrup. The duchess would never have allowed that, of course, but the adultery would nevertheless have been committed in the heart.

On her head was a close, green cap with a slanting, white plume that curled over behind. She was wearing an emerald ring on the third finger of her bridle hand, and on the wrist of the other she carried a hooded hawk. How slenderly fine and finely strong those wrists that played under the tight cuffs! And firm the arm, under its slashed sleeve. Sancho, thou art understood! This lovely, unattended lady made no pretence of introducing herself, but seemed quite aware that I knew who she was. With the familiarity of a relative she asked "Who was the fat man who evaporated a few minutes ago?"

"Evaporated! Is *that* how he did it? But he's not fat, Madam. He is the round American type, smooth and hard and elastic, like Mr. Hoover and Colonel Lindbergh," I explained.

"Round American type? Mr. Hoover? Colonel Lindbergh? I'm afraid I don't understand."

"Of course not, Madam. You are as far from anything like them as they are from anything like you."

"Yes. I'm rather a long way from everything, now . . . (*a pause*). It was very obliging of him to go like that, without making any fuss, wasn't it?"

"Yes. He wouldn't have done it that way at all, really."

"And you haven't told me who he was, after all. But I suppose it doesn't matter. Is your young companion asleep?"

"Yes, and no; and I must implore you to do nothing that will attract his attention."

"Why must I do nothing to attract his attention?"

"For the excellent reason that anything so fascinating as your Grace would agitate him so deeply that the progress of our journey would be imperilled."

"Isn't that a roundabout way of saying that you're jealous of him? You *are* jealous of him, aren't you?"

"Again, yes, and no. I think I was jealous of him yesterday, when I myself delayed the progress of our journey."

"Why are you making this journey?"

"For reasons about as sensible as those that sent Don Quixote roaming over Spain."

"Ah! Don Quixote! I shall never forget the time when my husband and I entertained the silly old gentleman."

"Would it not be more correct, Madam, to say that you made *him* entertain *you*? I have always wondered why you were so cruel as to make a laughing-stock of Don Quixote. You behaved exactly like the Public at a circus!"

"Surely, there is nothing cruel in laughing at blind absurdity? My good sir, Sancho was twice the man his master was."

"And the very loyal dupe of your Grace! Sancho, Madam, is the personification of common-sense, which is so common, but so seldom sense. When did he counsel any but the safe thing?"

"And his silly old master?"

"When did the gentle Don Quixote care for any but the honourable thing?"

"Sir Pedestrian, you grow hard to answer, and unless you talk to me of something else I shall have to attract your companion's attention."

"Heaven forbid, Madam! But that green cloth of your robe—is that the celebrated cloth of Cuenca?"

"My robe of Cuenca cloth! Why, mercy no! A good, stout cloth, Cuenca cloth, and very becoming to Sancho or to my footmen, but the cloth of my robe is from the finest looms of Venice."

I bowed in acknowledgment of my mistake, and the duchess made a mischievous gesture that said, were we in a drawing room, she would undoubtedly have tapped my wrist with her fan.

"Your Grace will perhaps forgive my ignorance of the textile industries of nearly four hundred years ago," I continued, "and may possibly instruct me in other matters. For instance, the commentators would have us believe that the country mansion where you entertained Don Quixote—I mean Sancho—was at Alcalá de Ebro, a place which seems to me to be on the wrong side of Zaragoza."

"They think it was Alcalá de Ebro, do they? Well—it might have been there," said the duchess with a tantalising smile. "What else would you like to know?" she added.

"I would like very much to know by what means Don Quixote and Sancho, mounted as they were, got from la Mancha to—er, Alcalá de Ebro?—in so miraculously short a time as—what was it?—five days?"

"By means of an enchantment, of course! Now, listen, Sir Pedestrian. You talk a lot about maps. You were talking of maps to that round American hoover, or whatever you called him. Why not study the route of Don Quixote, and place it correctly on a map?"

"Señor Azorín has already studied it."

"For the first and second journeys, but not for the third, the longest one."

"Perhaps—if your Grace knows of any road-map of Spain that was used in the sixteenth century I might make such a study."

"For that, I can only refer you to the archives. But make the study, as a small tribute to me, whom you will never see again. For me, and then I shall *believe* that you are sometimes obsessed by livelier things than maps. Do! For I must go now. Presently it will rain, and we all melt in the rain."

"We—all?"

"Yes—we. Those who belong to the small part of the past that has never died. We visit some of you on those rare, very rare opportunities when we find you alone. Oh, you needn't look sideways at Max" (she was clinking the buckle of her left shoe impatiently against the stirrup), "nor be jealous of him! If 'now' existed for him at present, I should not be here. Did I not say 'when we find *you* alone?' But good-bye! The rain is coming and I must go."

She sped, the light clatter of hoofs, the thin rattle of silver bells dissolving like a little vortex of sound drawn to a wavering, hollow filament in the deep distance, while a minatory patter of rain was thrown on the ground from clouds that had gathered stealthily in the darkening sky.

The sudden, sharp taste of the air, the rumble of thunder, made energy and activity leap like the bottle imp inside us. Reverie, the duchess, the director, were swept away by "here" and "now." Off came the packs, and out the coats! Then, on with the coats, and on the packs again, well fastened, and we were in the rain. Just in time!

For this was to be rain indeed. Splendid, invigorating rain, such as none but dry countries know. And it was overtaking us as irresistibly as a stampede of animals. Denser and heavier it became, until the whole silent wilderness was invaded, conquered, by a steady drone of sound; until the undulating land seemed to hold itself inertly attentive, straining itself in immobility, to hear every tiny, separate slap of a drop in the multitudinous crackling of a prodigal infinity of drops that sifted through every second everywhere. Wind there was none—or the rain had beaten it into stillness. Other sound there was none—or the rain had swallowed it in its own sound. The land lay beaten, conquered.

No! Not conquered, nor even beaten; but overcome, and won!

It lay abandoned to its most luxurious ecstasy. For what is the bright-beating sunshine to such a land, compared to this? This importunate, insistent, extravagant wetness of pouring water is the perfect mate of a dry wilderness, and the open heavens were discharging their capricious love on the gritty, parched expanses of Aragon. This was the plenitude of life, the dream of uttermost, apprehensive joy. None of your gentle condensations of showeriness; of melancholy, dripping woods! Keep that for the soft, green countries! Nothing will do here but the strong, irresistible possession that can stir the very marrow of the bones! But the land is tense, apprehensive, counting, studying every wingéd splash of every hurtling drop that assails its bosom. For every drop is important! No tremor of this ecstasy must go unheeded. If only the embrace will last, endure, culminate! For only then will this land, again relaxed, say that it has felt joy—the absolute thing that satisfies. Rain, over this ardour of thirst that is Aragon, is the cruellest of lovers, and the most beloved—which is not uncommon between lovers. Aragon, to be satisfied, must be drenched and drowned and filled to overflowing, with an unstinted bestowal of all that can be given—which also is not uncommon between lovers. Joy, absolute satisfaction, is rare as its need is absolute, in Aragon, and in all such thirsty landscapes.

I was once in Cairo on a day when it rained. It rains there once in a thousand days. Pashas and effendis covered their red tarbashes with sheets of *Al Mokattam*, the newspaper; that is, those who had copies of the newspaper did so. The red dye ran down the cheeks of the less fortunate. It drizzled weakly for half an hour, and it left Cairo looking dishevelled, soiled, disappointed, and unpaid. *Al Mokattam* reported the phenomenon in a special edition, with headlines worthy of a revolution. Well might the Aragonese wilderness be apprehensive! If only it rain enough, enough!

But this was a brave crowd of rain, and Aragon must surely thank *us* that it rained enough, that day. For the rain was a powerful, confident lover, not wholly engrossed with the serious occupation, but with energy to spare, an eye for trivial, extraneous things. It seemed to assail *us*, directly, with a taunt of scorn. "What are you going to do?" it asked. "There's nowhere to go—not even the perforated shelter of a tree. I've the advantage, and I'm not going to spare you. So, what you are going to do about it?"

But the rain was mistaken. It had not all the advantage, for advantage may be an attribute of moods, and we had caught the land's own gladness, felt the shudder of anticipation beneath our feet, and heard the cry of the eager hills for more, more, more! If we liked the rain, well, *we* had the advantage, in spite of its determined, sustained assault, which it probably thought was unmerciful. And we exulted in the rain, heard its droning song fill the silence, and felt a pagan trust in the water-gods! It brought once more a feeling of thoroughness into this adventure of ours, and a glad acceptance of the vigorous rough and tumble of the natural world filled us. In your voice there were tones that were not unlike triumph—as if to say "*This* was worth living for!" And it was. We were proud of it.

I went right back to childhood, and captured a forbidden pleasure that eluded me in those incomplete years. At last I was where I had no right to be—really "out in the rain" (in Australia we say "out in the *wet*")—and I would stay out in the rain, and wholeheartedly "get wet" until the rain had tired itself to exhaustion.

I thought, too, of a night in New York, when I sat in my rooms working late, in pyjamas (they were, of course, *pajamas* in New York). At midnight I peered through the window and saw that it was snowing heavily, silently, in great, curled flakes as big as feathers. The very best snowstorm of the year! It took no more than ten minutes to put on warm clothes and get over to your dormitory, to thump on your door, with "Max! It's snowing hard! Get dressed, and come out in it!" Of course you came—you never fail to respond to an opportunity like that—and we spent three hours in Riverside Park, with never a soul to dispute our ownership of the whole, mantled park. At 3 a.m. we sat in a Child's restaurant on Broadway, devouring "crishp bac'n" and wheat cakes.

What matter to us if it cost New York two million dollars to clear the streets after that storm?

What matter to us should it *never* stop raining in Aragon? There were dry socks, underwear, shirts, in our packs. To be sure, my waterproof was old, and betrayed its trust, and your heavy coat was never meant to keep rain out. But what matter?

On we strode, happy, defiant, our coats getting heavier and heavier, opening and flapping around our knees. My flannel trousers dragged lower and lower and shed part of their water into my boots through the eyelets. Your woolly stockings lost heart, and drained water straight down into your boots. But there's something jolly in being able to squdge warm, wet toes inside warm, wet boots, when being wet has ceased to matter. And those heavy, trusty boots of ours! They had given us little thought in dry Spain—it would not be a question of how to *keep* the water out of them, but one of how to *get* it out of them, now. But our boots never failed us—even if mine were, as the bootmaker, who extracted the nails in Madrid, informed us, "of poor quality, and machine-made in Limoges."

With extravagant satisfaction we sat down by the roadside and took our ten minutes' rest. The rain poured over us. There was no shelter within five miles, but why let that count? Always, at ten minutes to the hour, we rested beside the road for ten minutes. Could rain cancel or postpone that ceremony, that ritual observance? Never! It could nevertheless modify it. My smoking, while on the road, was limited to these intervals of halt, and the rain made it impossible to keep a cigarette alight here. However, as my previous attempts of that day had all ended in failure to roll Arrendataría cigarettes into new papers, the rain saved me from the possibility of failure this time.

During the pause we were able to watch the country drink up the water, absorb it, swallow it with a thirst still far from satisfied. There were no pools, except on the hard road; no little channels running like lizards' tails. Down went the water into the ground, and the ground yearned for more and yet more! I had not hitherto taken count of the prevailing, absorbent sandiness of this region, but the rain betrayed it—a land of hard, trampled, gritty clay, not dusty in fine weather, but everywhere gritty, rough to the palm of the hand, hard underfoot.

As surely as the anxious ground drank up every single drop of the rain, so did the scanty vegetation, the wiry grass of low places, and the stiff little bushes of the rolling hillsides, become perceptibly greener as we watched them. This was no mere business of ablution—they were not only cleaner—they really were getting greener, tenderer, more succulent! I am ready to swear that soft shoots of delicate, new grass were thrust up under our eyes, while it rained!

It recalled to my mind a vivid passage in one of my old textbooks, a German reader for science students, in which a German botanist describes the sudden transformation of the Algerian Sahara when rain calls into being not only a rich plant-growth but sudden hosts of animals also. "*Gazellen weiden in Rudeln,*" says the botanist, and he conjures them out of nothing.

This rain, that rained upon Aragon, would mean pasture, fat pasture for so bony a country. And I felt that all around us, for miles and miles, at points five miles apart, shepherds were already standing on their heads for joy, while their sheep turned somersaults about them, and the dogs encircled each flock with a swift, revolving hoop of tireless, barking exuberance.

Oh, delirious, tremulous thanksgiving of rain-soaked wilderness! It is the incredible, mad pitch of intensity that comes in the rarest, perfect conjunction of things. It is a love motif in Nature. It is fullness; the release of angel youth in ancient things; utter joy. And rare, rare. For only if there be bounteous rain enough, is the lean country satisfied.

And Aragon that day was satisfied! Wetstriding through the rain, we felt a freshness brightening around us—peeping green of tiny stubble-pond in hollows by the road; a laden soaking of the ground; the gathering of waters on the ground; road puddles; and at last, the flow, the draining of excess, and little channels running full.

The rain still came, crowding and thinning, droning hard or sifting gently, and the grey monotony of sky clumped slowly into cloudmass. Interval, and the rain suspended, left our ears far-reaching for the rain-sound withdrawn, until the running waters of the ground called them to a nearby sweetness. Light glowed in the air like a thing dissolved, and again the rain came down. A slackening fall, graciously retiring with longer interval, and veins of radiance beginning to break through the marble sky, until at last the sun brightly shone in our faces and light lay prone along the earth behind us.

Rain, and the cloud-pall of a whole broad region, lifted and melted into vaporous clarity and vanished in the air. Gasgold sunlight, thick and warm, clad the wet breasts of Aragon like a tenuous, absorbent substance, while the waters poured from the land in the brightness of an open day. Light and water in full flood, and the saturated hills reposing, quiet, still, and satisfied. It had rained, from the first assault to the last fringes of retirement, for more than two hours.

Wet as the seeping country, we strode into the sunshine, slowly, uphill. We splashed through puddles on the road, and left our footprints in the lobes and soft patches of mud and sand that had been swept across it. Every channel was flowing musically, and the still, warm air was quickly dry and thirsty, as if, in Aragon, something, somewhere, must always be unsatisfied, athirst—the land, the air; ourselves?

But the land was changing into clay, moistly brick-red, and bearing puddles of opaque tea-with-milk; shedding muddy waters in steep-sided grooves and channels, and by the water swept away. New channels had been torn and ripped in the crumbling clay that afternoon, and old ones had been eaten into greater width, sawn deeper, gouged backward into the flanks of the hills. Two hours of erosion had lined the faces of these red claylands more deeply than months of drought or gentle weather. And still the channels ran, their walled clay slumped, eaten backward nearly into the road itself at one place. The waters ran, the sun shone brightly and more brightly, hotly, and the air was dry.

And the waters ran one way. Forward, with us. The road, sagging over the long, gentle roll that shut Bujaraloz, Candasnos, out behind us, leaned and sank at last. Low ripple-mounds on the back of the flat roll were flattening out on either hand, subsiding, and behold, Ebro, glistening, far away, between broad, leaning lands! An open, shelving, unobstructed world.

(*c*) *Ebro*

Fair distance draw down the eyes, and hold the mind to one thing. There is no looking to the right, but only forward, far; then, sweep the river-line; the tilt of wide plain skirting up to hills beyond; then further sweep the river-line and follow, leftward, into all-consuming hills. Down, gently down, as light sinks, the line of the bright river goes, gently, leftward, down into the hills. A Jordan, strong, that flows to living, far-off, Latin seas more bright than any land. Ebro!

The first of May, and its promise well fulfilled.

How tightly the moments hold, then loosen their grip for the hours! Eyes relax into sight, and the mind into recording. Along the river the land itself ran bright and green, the willow-green of gentle trees, the deep, dark, green opacity of other trees, and the gem-green, water-green of lucerne crops and fodder grass. Brown ran the shelving, open miles of grass toward the river, with here and there a distant flock of sheep, a browsing herd, and horses in wide freedom.

Beyond the river there were towns, where the hills broke over the tilted plain, Fuentes de Ebro, Rodén, el Burgo de Ebro, spreading broad and fanwise out from the sudden hills.

And between the towns a slow train crawling, tiny in the distance, and slow, along the open, level miles. We followed it with our eyes. Another train crawled up the valley, passed the first one, and went on. Valencia, Pamplona, and the lure of names; far destinations through the night; and link and line and all the earth together bound; and men a-trailing on the Ebro line, Valencia to Pamplona, to and fro. And men along the roads of Ebro line, to and fro; ourselves.

So slow the train out yonder in the sweep of miles that speed and hurry, seen afar, become impertinence to time. So slow that swinging legs, along the road, feel made for telling seconds not untruly, and for bearing life at life's own speed, and bearing it in progress. For haste is abuse of time, and if we must go far there are more hours in the day. Hasten we will not, but into the hours we will march, into the miles, and not wear out the day. Along the road we advance, but in trains we only go. Nearly always we have "gone," both of us, before and since, but here, on the road, was time enough, and progress, and in the journey there was room for life.

Spacious reflection had made us forget the road, as it bore us steadily toward the river, closer and closer, yet not shelving downward with the land! All thought had veered leftward, toward the river, until, remembering the road, we looked to the right, and found the north locked out by a coast of level hills of clay.

Beautifully scolloped, they swept slowly upward from the shelving plain with a steepening curve, to meet their level top, like a line of cliffs. The road ran close in under them, pushed by them ever closer to the river as we advanced. No stream issued from this long cuesta, but its lower slopes were furrowed, folded into channels that smoothed outward, opening on to the plain, and in some the temporary waters ran. But many were already dry.

For the sun, late-blazing and low in the afternoon, had already stanched the tardy waters that had not sped across unhindered miles to Ebro, and the warm earth was nearly sun-dry outside, feebly brilliant in its freshness. We ourselves were nearly dry outside, and were drying off quickly in this thirsty air, even to our boots. Only the deep mud of the road, now caking and stiffening, would prevent our boots from getting quite dry before we reached our destination.

It was visible in front of us now, that destination, Osera de Ebro, a flat, straggling, buff-coloured village, with one stumpy tower, a couple of miles ahead. The low sun shining in our eyes cast the open valley into a hazy flatness of subdued dazzle, and Osera, glinting here and there, touched to brilliance on edges and slopes, throwing its shadows towards us, looked questionable. Would we get beds there? Osera means "a bears' den," and the village doubtless takes its name from the edge of the hills nearby, the Monte de Osera. But? Wondering, and rapidly drying, we moved towards it, imperceptibly downhill.

We got to the place at about seven o'clock and by that time were quite dry. A muddy place, unprepossessing, common, and it smelt of manure—or it should have smelt of manure. It looked too poor to have a fonda, but we found a posada where they told us with amiable firmness that the lodging of guests was quite beyond their range of business. In order to get rid of us they pointed across the way to another house which they said was also a posada, one of the kind we sought.

A dour old woman who was standing in the doorway set her square jaws as we approached. She had seen us turned away from the first place, and, perhaps taking her cue from the behaviour of rivals in business, made it clear in the fewest of words that to expect bed and board at her establishment was an affront to the house. Board, dinner that night, we might certainly have, should we then need it, but beds—never! Such things were not done in Osera. Furthermore, the old woman assured us with grim finality that there was no fonda, and no other posada in the village. Osera—a bears' den!

Our whole afternoon was eclipsed behind a rush of annoyance, and we left Bruin's wife standing in her doorway without even saying buenas tardes, which was all one to her. Somewhere in Osera there must be shelter for travellers, and we would occupy that shelter to-night.

"Let's go and see the alcalde about it."

"All right."

And to the alcalde we went, guided by an old person of the town-crier class of whom we asked the way—price one peseta.

The alcalde was an unexpectedly young man of about twenty-seven. We had hitherto believed that all alcaldes were bent under the venerable weight of years, and that their behaviour was gravely imposing. This man, however, was younger than myself, and was very brusque. He was puffy and freckled, had red hair and a bad tempered mouth, and he bounded downstairs from the floor above, unmistakably annoyed at being interrupted, and in a hurry to get back to what he had been doing.

You looked at me as if to say "No luck here!" but, although we felt that it was really useless to do so, we began to explain ourselves. As soon as the alcalde understood the drift of our peroration he cut it short, issued some decided statement far too quickly for us to understand, bounded upstairs again, and disappeared for ever. Osera, it seemed, had officially locked and bolted its doors against us.

"What did he say?" we asked of a tall, gentle, middle-aged woman who was in the room.

"He said that you may sleep in a room belonging to the ayuntamiento—the town hall," she answered. "There's a bed there," she added, "used as a hospital sometimes. He's the schoolmaster, and can't attend to you himself because he has a class upstairs."

Osera de Ebro had really extended an angry cordiality towards us, presenting us its freedom! Perhaps even Bruin's wife might scowlingly serve us quite a good dinner later on. Was Pilar of Fraga a symbolic person, an augury of genuine behaviour that might give the lie to these hard manners? How firm they were, through and through, some of these people of Spain! Only clear and full decision of character could reconcile the apparent contradiction of their hard exteriors and their inner lack of prejudice. We liked that freckled fellow, so good a sample of the "hard-boiled" Spaniard (thanks for the term, Max), rude but reliable, and we liked him not wholly out of gratitude, for we hadn't seen the bed yet.

The woman sent us off with an escort of four very small girls who were to take us to a man who would arrange everything. The little girls were very shy indeed, but quite confident, and they walked ahead of us in a file, close to the wall, to be out of the mud of the street. Dainty little persons they were, and quite well dressed, and they spoke not a word as they filed along. When we came to the village square they pointed to a young man who happened to be walking towards us. He was the man. Then they stood prettily in a row, with a little boy on their left who had joined the party unnoticed. We placed a penny in each shy, willing hand, thanking them very much for taking care of us, and they went quietly back, smiling heralds of the abrupt alcalde.

The man understood us at once. He was a young man of about twenty-four, not very tall, but well built, rather fair in complexion, quietly decided in manner, likeable and intelligent. He interested me in two ways. Much younger than myself, he was, nevertheless, much better poised, more mature, a person who knew that he was thoroughly grown to manhood, and had learnt it by living independently within his own range of experience and feeling, and had come to know himself and his worth. I had never been able to do this, and had not, at the age of thirty-five, that essential, inner knowledge of being "grown-up"—self-possession, they call it. Too much of my life had been lived for me; too much of my feeling had been drilled not to dare show itself, partly because some of it was supposed not to be gentlemanly. The possibility that it might have been manly was quite overlooked. And so, I envied this man his complete self-possession.

But, as well as this, he represented something I had begun to notice in Spain. He was, in appearance, an Australian type, a man who would look at home on a South Australian sheep station. I had noticed others before him, lanky Queenslanders, bronze men of my own race, in Spain, and was to notice others thereafter, and it seemed to me that the world is made of repeating patterns; that my own, far-away, dry country is another, larger Spain, breeding a strain allied, if only in looks, to a strain that evolved here, in the dry, sunny corner of Europe. And, if my observation be correct, this resemblance of some Spaniards to some Australians may well be the reason why we found Spain so easy to us, and why France was often so difficult. Here, we were readily understood. This man understood us, and we him, before a word had been spoken.

He led us down a short street on the western side of the square, into a street that ran south towards the river, and presented us to a group of three women who were sitting in a doorway peeling and preparing vegetables. His people, evidently, mother and two sisters; an engaging family that accepted us quietly, with steady, trustful glances, and no flutter of behaviour at all. An immediate acceptance, with no doubt or question in their looks, no false cordiality in their smiles, nor forced affability in their words. They were natural, their truth was open, and they achieved without effort that perfect adequacy of manner for an occasion which is only mastered as a pose by centuries of aristocratic breeding.

The mother, a tall, grey-haired woman, had once been handsome. Now, at forty-five, she was comely, and full of an understanding that had been learnt without bitterness. Undoubtedly a woman with cares, but she would never have called them trials. The elder girl was about twenty-two, hefty, and ready in quiet laughter. The younger one, of about sixteen, dark-haired, brown-eyed, was a calm young person who spoke little, but not on account of any reserve or shyness. Gentle people, all of them, with a full trust in each other.

We were relieved of our packs and overcoats and were given a blunt knife and a brush to clean our muddy boots. The son explained us, and arranged with his mother that we should have dinner, and breakfast in the morning, with them. While we were talking, a boy of fifteen passed up the street carrying a very large reaping hook and leading a donkey laden with a green-piled cushion of soft lucerne. In the muddy street, between scabrous, buff walls, the load passed with a colour-fragrance as fresh as rain. The boy smiled at us all but said nothing, and the man, seeing us return the smile, explained him with the words "My young brother."

Dinner would not be for some time: would we like to go down to the river? Ebro—the river! Where was it? The man led us a hundred yards down the street, across a nearly dry irrigation canal, and we were beside it.

Ebro, powerful, wide, and swiftly rolling, muddy-brown. A grand river, and Osera, tawdry in its buff walls and warm tan tiles, spread on the bank.

The end of a long spindle of green island clad in lush willow steered the currents acutely into streaming fusion opposite the town, the near channel narrow, the far one wide. As soon as I looked across there I felt sorry for Don Quixote and the little bark. On just such an island stood the mill, and just such a current as this near one swept them into the millrace. Ebro is too strong for swimmers.

I asked the man what navigation was possible on such a river, and he said that the Ebro is not navigable, except for small craft here and there, where the currents are slack. There was, he added, a scheme under consideration to make it navigable for larger craft from its mouth up to Zaragoza—a scheme only.

In exactly what direction, we asked, did Zaragoza lie? Why, he would show it to us! The tops of its towers could be seen from here far-away and small, but on an evening like this, after the rain, they would be clear enough to good eyes. There, yonder, over the island —could we see them? Twenty-eight kilometres—seventeen or eighteen miles—away, in a direct line.

Yes, we could see them! The towers and spires, the tops of the domes of our city of to-morrow, points of a filigree diadem fixed on the still brow of time. Fairy grace and motionless fragility, pricking into the western low-sky, far across the green willows and the green, green softness of the valley floor. Gently waving green, and the tiny, crystal rigidity afar, minutely delicate and still, behind the near moving softness; and small, each tower, as the near, slender leaves. And Ebro, rolling down from there!

We forgot the man. We exchanged, instead, the wonder of our minds, as far as honesty allowed. Of all the fair, unseen, familiar things that men have built, you recalled the Taj Mahal, and I, in words, the Kremlin towers of Moscow. But I was lost in the secret land of Judea, and saw no Taj Mahal, no Kremlin; saw not even Zaragoza. It was, to me, a fragile fiction of Jerusalem.

The first of May, and its bright promise renewed!

Haze of the western evening, and the still towers faded on a heavier sky. Boys were leading mules and splendid, spirited farm horses down the muddy ramp that brought our street to the water's edge. The animals drank, whinnied, climbed up the slope, and passed us again, while others took their places at the strand. Magnificent beasts, these farm horses of Spain, and not to be seen along the highways.

We talked with the man, lazily, while the bright evening faded. A small messenger was sent into the village to get cigarettes and matches for me, but when he delivered them, the man firmly opposed to my attempt to tip him—it was generous, but children must not learn to expect such a reward for small, polite services. The man understood what children must not do. Several small boys were looking for fish in the sloppy, muddy bottom of the irrigation canal. They were having a great game, stamping their feet and splashing the mud far and wide, but—one of them had his boots on. The man watched them for a moment, then gave a firm order:

"Fernando, sal del agua!—Come out of the water!" But Fernando had to be told twice before he took any notice. I sped back twenty-five years, to a bright Sunday morning when I spoilt a new pair of tan boots, looking for fish in a muddy, dried-up pond near Sydney. And I sped back to Osera with a feeling that children's play, and children's penalties, are also firmly woven in the repetition of the whole world's pattern.

Across the valley Fuentes de Ebro lay gently tilted towards us, its lights beginning to glimmer in the growing dark. We turned and walked back into the village. Beyond the houses rose the belfry of Osera, open at the top, under its flat, octagonal pyramid of tiles, the bells exposed and ringing, a storks' nest in an angle between beam and ledge like a fat basket stuffed with straw, the storks themselves resting, angular, in smooth unconcern. I sent the storks a message—that there were lots of frogs at Bujaraloz—but they didn't even acknowledge it. They looked as if they understood everything better than I did; the harmlessness of noisy, swinging bells; the security of the tops of belfries; the advantages of delectable mud along the valley bottom; the need of eating fish on Friday for a change—and yesterday was fishing day!

Dinner was ready at the man's house, and he took us into the kitchen. It was a small room, spotlessly clean, with a hearth like that in the inn at Bujaraloz, and it was very full of bright pots and vessels, and bright beings. We three men sat at the table. The three women stayed in the room and waited on us, but they did not dine, and the large black dog and cat also stayed, in the hope of dining with us. Enamel plates were used at that meal, and there were no knives. The man took a jack-knife out of his pocket and cut bread with it, and I produced the Solingen knife from Lérida, which we used, you and I, turn about. The bread was good, the wine was good, the ham, the dish of broad beans, the eggs, and the coffee were all good, and for the first time in Spain we had cows' milk. We felt at home, and conversation was easy.

The family talked with us, and discussed its own domestic affairs in our presence as fully as if we had not been there. Interesting, unimportant talk with us, and a lesson, quite forgotten now, on how to call cats in Spanish. I remember only that the Spanish cat answers to some general call based on the word *miz*—puss, and, unlike the French cat, is not generally called by its name. "*Minou! Minou!*—Puss! Puss!" is heard far less often in France than the cat's actual name.

A meal was carried upstairs while we dined, and we inferred that there was an invalid in the house, most probably the father. Or, was this house the village hospital? Our bed was in a place sometimes used as a hospital. The boy, however, explained that he was only home on leave, exempted from military service for several months. This, when Spain was mobilised and at war! Then, too, there was the mother, whose face showed that she was under a strain of some kind. Most likely it was the father, seriously ill, and the boy home to take charge of the family affairs. You worked all that out, I think.

After dinner we said that we would like to go to bed. We were given our packs and coats, and I, on a natural assumption, turned towards the stairs. This seemed to be a good joke, for they all laughed, and explained in chorus that we were not to sleep in this house at all, but in another building. The boy led us there—a building that ran right across the bottom of the square. He unbolted a massive, double door, switched on the light, and said that this would be our bedroom. It was a large, lofty room, and empty, except for the bed in one corner. It was, he said, the room where the village band practised. Then, having asked us what time we would like him to bring us water and towels in the morning, he said good night, and bolted the double door on us. We were locked in!

Or were we? A smaller room opened off the larger one. We found the switch, but from the smaller room there was no other exit. We were really locked in, and it was urgently necessary for us to go out. Other than the assortment of brass and woodwind instruments in the smaller room, there was not a vessel nor utensil in the place. You, however, are sometimes a person of resource, when the mother of your invention is unusually strong. You saw the possibilities of a small, barred window high up in the wall opposite the double door, to be reached only by placing a chair on a table. Chair and table were brought from the small room, and everything was arranged. Then, at a critical moment, we heard through the window a soft peal of laughter—women on a neighbouring balcony above a garden that should have been moonlit but was not.

The bed was clean and comfortable, though narrow. What its hospital uses might have been did not worry us at all, and we slept so soundly that the boy was in the room in the morning, with towels and water, before we were properly awake. I had not heard him unbolting the heavy doors.

He was in a silent mood, but our appearance, when we got out of bed, fascinated him, and he leaned against the table and studied us as if our like had never come his way before. We had slept in our American underwear, cotton, one-piece suits of exactly the same pattern, and to him it must have looked like some kind of uniform. He studied each article of clothing as we dressed, and when we were ready he led us silently over to the house for breakfast.

We paid a bill of twelve pesetas to this courteous family for our meals and bed, which was a fair charge for the service given, and their farewell, not overdone, was quietly sincere. Their acceptance had been so free from inquisitiveness that we knew, really, nothing about them, nor they of us, for no questions of a personal kind had been asked on either side, but, in their anonymous hospitality, an understanding more valuable than information had existed between us.

The son did exactly what our host of Cubélls had done. Leading us out of the village on to a cart track where men were going to the fields with loads of dung, and past large piles of manure separated by mat walls, he accompanied us silently for about a kilometre, to where the track joined the main road. Then, with polite abruptness, he left us and went back. It was an interesting repetition of courtesy, and it brought a comment from you. "Say what you like, A.," you asserted, as if I were going to contradict you, "French may be the polite language, but the Spaniards are the polite people!" I still agree with that.

For many kilometres we walked along a straight road, between irrigated river flats on the left, and barren hills on the right. There were flocks of sheep on the hills, far apart, few, on the unbounded expanse of niggardly pasture. A symbolic spread of narrow prodigality and bony hunger, those flats to left and hills to right, along the straight road that leads to the capital of Aragon! Symbol of small piles of hoarded wealth in waste spaces; and of cloistered concentration of adornment; of tiny courts, bedecked in heaped, elaborate abundance, within the grim severity of structural Spain;

and symbol of rare colour, of intense, dull harmony, of rich, heavy hues that speed the blood, glowing in patches on a vast obscurity, the deep and melancholy background of this land. Some such meaning I was able to discern, as we walked between the river and the hills, but not for many days was I to know that it expressed the spiritual proportion of the Spain *we* know, you and I, nor that the balance is exquisite.

At the end of the first hour the river swung away to the left, to place five kilometres between us and it until the end of the day, but the road continued straight on between bare hill and watered field. Villafranca de Ebro, the first village, straggly and squalid, down and off the road to the left, astonished us with a fine dome on a large building, most likely the church. Very well placed for display was that big yellow church, the whole space before it unencumbered, the village houses standing to either side like crowds awaiting a ceremony.

It may be thought that all domes are alike, but they are more subtle in variety than towers or arches, and this big, yellow dome of Villafranca was noble, plainly ribbed, with a right measure of heaviness and fullness. There are domes that are bubbles and domes that are merely lids, and domes like this one, that are a spiritual condition. It had a meaning, the dome of Villafranca, that was to unfold within the next few days.

Alfajarín, the next village, lay athwart the road at the end of the next hour, and it, too, had a dome, but a poor one. Why, I wondered, had we forsaken towers for domes this day? There were many towers behind us, but here, where we might consider ourselves in the heart of Aragon, were domes. Towers look outward over the land, watchful things that bespeak a need for vigilance—it was something to do with that, the meaning. But I didn't think much about it then, nor, I believe, did you think about it at all. Lunch was more important, as we had to buy it at Alfajarín.

The market proved to be better than we had expected. There were not, of course, any signs on the shops, nor display in shop windows. Shop windows, in Aragonese villages, are no different from the house windows. One has to peer into dark interiors through the open doorways, guided, in part, by his sense of smell. Acrid—a wine shop; yeasty—a bakery, etc.

It was a combination of senses that led you boldly into a dark shop, where a handsome girl stood munching hot, fresh cakes (you called them "biscuits") behind a kind of servery. We bought everything we needed for lunch from that girl, and then asked about the cakes—couldn't we buy some of them, too? They were home-made, just baked, but not for sale. The girl, however, offered us a sample to taste, and we regretted all the more that they were not for sale, but the batch was only large enough for the household—or so she said.

Did we ever meet a Spanish girl who could be deceived by those pretty compliments that are rooted in self-interest? They knew exactly what proportion of compliment was directed to their cakes, and what to themselves, and they measured out their responses adroitly.

This girl knew just how much we really liked the cakes, how much we really liked her, and how much of our admiration was expressed for no other purpose than to induce her to sell cakes. She responded only to the genuine, but her response was itself genuine, for we pleased her. And she pleased us. And in all these little encounters I had to draw consolation from my one, poor advantage over you—in comparison with you I was a linguist, already able to speak the better Castilian.

The ideal place for lunch was a clump of trees, down and across the slanting fields to the left, just past the village. But the ideal place was encumbered by men, farm labourers, "lewd fellows of the baser sort," according to our severe judgment on all unconscious usurpers of what were never our rights, and we passed further on. We selected the round top of a steep knoll for our picnic ground, a grassy sugarloaf that lifted us above the common roads and earthy farms of clods of men. The soil was damp up there, so we spread our overcoats and sat with our backs to a gypsum wall, the last vestige of some old building.

The grassy hillock was covered with white, starry flowers no more than half an inch across, demure on tallish stalks, and all being visited by systematic bees. Each bee would hover for a moment in front of flower after flower, until the profitable flower was found, seized, and drained. The next bee would not touch that flower. There were other, smaller, pink flowers in the grass, but the bees took no notice of their presence at all.

It rained a little after lunch, and we had to run down to the trees by the road for shelter, leaving our apian studies unfinished, so that I have not learned what bees do when it rains. But the rain passed quickly, and we went on for another hour between fields and hills, to Puebla de Alfinden, a very undistinguished place, but not entirely without advantages.

There were some trees lining the road for a short distance beyond the village, and we halted suddenly under one of them, very glad of its shelter, when an unexpected shower of rain hurled itself down abruptly and heavily, to last for a mere quarter of an hour. The gutters filled with a rush of muddy water as we stood under the dripping tree, and men along the village street opened umbrellas, as if they knew the weather too well to let it take them by surprise.

During that brief halt for shelter I felt a temper in running water of a kind I had never felt before. The rain of yesterday had fallen joyously, and was little concerned with its inevitable work of scouring the face of the land, of washing Aragon away. But this angry downpour of to-day pelted viciously, as if it objected to the precautions men take to prevent their houses from being undermined and washed away. There were ditches and gutters around the Puebla de Alfinden, countrified ones, to be sure, but they held the run-off under control and robbed it of all power to do damage. The water came snarling down the high bank behind us, imprisoned by a concrete runway that led it into a ditch and thence through a strong, covered drain under the road to the other side. It growled along the gutters, a string of subdued curses at its inability to overflow, and it seemed aware that it was being restrained into defeat.

The storm-water of paved cities runs in an exultant pleasure of easy, conducted flow, as if it feels the release of having no work to do. Quiet ditches of the fields are languidly content. And not even the most furious mountain torrent truly complains of its natural bed. Yet, the muddy rush of water around Alfinden showed evil temper. It wanted to tear at the roots of the village, only to find itself thrown aside by the simplest of defences, shooting past, to spend itself on heedless ground.

The day, however, had no intention of becoming rainy, and we were soon able to walk onward into the warmth of afternoon, still between river land and bare hills. There were trees along the road in places, trees "of a kind," as you referred to them, and the hills became lower, gentler, less barren, as we advanced, until a little cultivation appeared on them.

Things began to look unkempt, straggly: the edges of the dusty road untrimmed; the houses here and there down on the flats less rurally earthy, more numerous, and more like the flimsy abodes of poverty; the nearby fields less farm-like and more yard-like. We knew what this meant—the proximity of a city; though as yet there was no glimpse of yesterday's frail towers. But we were within the banlieue, that girdle of blighting influence and corrosion of all country things, that sore fringe of creeping growth, that surrounds even the loveliest of modern cities, except in Holland.

When towns had walls the green land swept right up to them, as it swept right up to the grassy ramparts of Antwerp until just after the end of the War. And even the loveliness of those modern cities that can claim such beauty, is an inheritance from the past. In spite of our sanitation, our hygiene, our understanding of convenience and comfort, the civic planning and the zoning schemes of to-day are degenerate in taste, for, to look at the growing fringe of a modern city is to know that men can be altogether heedless of beauty, while to look at the heart of a city built in modern times is to know that taste has been brutalised, understands not beauty, but only effect.

I believe that most New Yorkers prefer the Woolworth building to the little City Hall close by; and I suspect that many people in Madrid believe the showy, new post office to be a finer structure than the old ayuntamiento. The new buildings are so big, so sanitary within, and the prosperous burghers are so ignorant of fine values, yet so satisfied with themselves! Anything that looked very expensive, very hygienic, very large, *must* be good, and, as for the outskirts of a town, where employees live, well, they are less important if the "signs of prosperity" are clearly manifest "in the city."

One may enter Paris from Versailles, through the Bois de Boulogne, and believe that it is the most beautiful city in the world; or one may enter it through St. Denis, from the north, and conclude that only a small part of Paris is touched with real beauty—and that Parisians live, mostly, not in that part. How many know this, I wonder? People who believe that the West End is London certainly do not know it, and people whose cars limit their movements to the wide thoroughfares and bright places cannot be aware that three-quarters of many a modern town are hideous enough to fill an Arab from the tents with scorn and pity. But, to end the sermon before you can say that it does not apply to Dallas!

We were in the banlieue of Zaragoza, disappointed to find our cluster of fairy pinnacles rising not from lawns and gardens, but from diseased fields. Not even this ancient place, the Cæsarea Augusta of the Romans, which was there, like Balaguer and Lérida —*Ilerda*—before the Romans came, had grown outwards in sustained beauty as even a shell can grow. Ten kilometres out on the main road Zaragoza has breathed blight, a nauseous breath that assails the traveller long before the city discloses itself. And the blight of arid hills and dusty fields is more terrible than the blight of verdure; than the mouldiness and rot that fester on some sides of a city like Toulouse, for example.

But we were able to lift our eyes from the sorry country. Mountains had been rising in the distance before us, the sierras of high Aragon, the edge of the meseta or tableland of central Spain, along which the valley of the Ebro runs. A western distance, hanging like the dark fringe of a curtain on the horizon, shutting the world out, where the lowland sweeps to the feet of hills, whence the high Aragon overlooks the low. And mountains, reared behind the hills, black-brown and vaporous.

There lay on them, or lay above them, at one place on our line of west, something—something white and still; a last slab of cloud sinking behind them? We watched it and watched it as it lay there, still, unchanging, and inconceivably far away. Could it be cloud—or was it snow? And it hung, or lay, or floated, or rested, the whole afternoon, unchanging cloud or snow—snow or cloud—which? Was ever cloud so tranquil and so still? Was ever land so high above high land could cherish fields of lofty snow in May?

As if to help us forget not only the sorry countryside but even the far, hypnotic cloud, the towers of Zaragoza rose gently in the middle-distance, overtopping the dark trees of its river banks. Between yesterday's diminutive, unsubstantial illusion, and the far proximity of to-day, they had changed, from the sharp intricacy of jewelled points, into such a grove of columns as might rise from an old, Hindoo city, richly dark, flamboyantly totemic. They seemed to top some hidden city, some piled and tropic place of swarthy people fat in wealth and piety, as if they, the towers, alone were solid and real in a fickle world of mirage; as if the yellow countryside might fall away, like an ancient cerement shaken into dust, revealing, not Zaragoza, but the heaped terraces of some fictive Benares rising tier upon ornamental tier from its canopied pavilions and marble tanks beside a sacred river!

Strongly, however, as the towers themselves were able to evoke an Oriental magic, they spread no magic into the material outskirts of Zaragoza. Poor dwellings, that had crept from the fields up to the roadside, were closing in to line the road, now on one side, now on the other. They were mere shacks at first, hovels of mean wood, sheet-iron and hessian. Low brick buildings appeared among them and presently displaced them, so that the road became a street running between strings of continuous buildings five or six miles out of town. We were in the faubourg, that tentacular outgrowth of so many Continental cities, which invests the end of every highway in a thin channel, a brittle tube of bricks and mortar, the arterio-sclerosis of roads where they run into cities. Just behind the houses on either hand were tawdry fields; beyond them were the towers, the far, motionless cloud; but between them was only dust, and the squalid life they released on to the street.

Traffic. A man leading grey donkeys, each with a fat, bright, metal milk can slung on either side. No tall, conical, British milk cans were these, with no straight sides nor bands for reinforcement. These were ample, fanciful, Spanish milk cans, metal cruses, with liberal curves like the hips of contented matrons who have been prolific—grey-metal casts from the earthen jars of Fraga. And instead of a safe, tin stopper, every can was closed with a mighty cork, a thick, round disc of cork, eight inches across. And why not, in the land of cork? And if cork be hygienic enough for tomato sauce or beer, why not also for milk—most likely goats' milk?

Beer! Of course! It was hot there, along the dusty road between the low, brick buildings, and some of them—little shops—looked "low" enough to be dens where beer should freely flow. We entered every one whose outside breathed the faintest air of promise, only to find, along a mile of thirsty faubourg, that beer was not anywhere obtainable. But not for one moment did we renounce the idea—we merely suspended it.

The faubourg, opening out, placed us beside an extensive building on the right, a disused factory, modern, ambitious, housing perhaps an elaborate plant, but all deserted, falling into disrepair, and nothing to indicate what used to be made there. A collapse of capital, and a thousand men and women paid off, delivered again to their little shops and little farms and little independence. An encouraging sight, that disused factory, oh American companion, for in spite of Moscow and the new proletariat I like to see the bonds of sanitary, modern slavery lying broken here and there. Perhaps we shan't succeed in sterilising the world, after all.

But the next thing to attract our eyes uttered a rude contradiction to all that. In the acute angle of junction of another highway—one from Alcubierre, over across the stony mountains—with our own, was a sign advertising American cars. A proclamation, rather, of evangelical commerce.

The destiny of expansion used to be—in the old, Brazen Age—the subjection of the unenlightened to our own particular cross or crescent. We now convert the unenlightened to a belief in our latest mechanical device, and are satisfied to expand our money bags instead of our territory.

Back in France, a selfish country that resists foreign invasion with uncommon success, we had seen many, many automobiles, but they were nearly all French. A few things, like canned fruit and Palmolive soap, are admitted into France, after the authorities have haggled and bartered with the foreign devil. Even a few other things, like agricultural machines, have been sent into France, mainly by the North-American devil, who pins coloured pictures on the walls of cafés and post offices—pictures of the International Harvester, the Fordson Tractor, the Deering Mower, the McCormack Harvester, and the Massey Harris Reaper and Binder. But in spite of the pretty tracts that show these bright engines of harvest on golden fields more spacious than the fields of France, and in spite of the *Psychology of Modern Advertisement*, there are not many agricultural machines in France at all, French or foreign.

There is, instead, an atavistic faith in spades and hard work. And withal, the French devil stalks abroad himself, with perfume (not soap, but, rather, a transcendent of soap) in his pocket and champagne in his valise. He has, at any rate, the merit of trying to convert us to articles of faith that are peculiarly his own, instead of offering us cheap imitations of our personal idols, made to look rich and rare under slick paint and smart varnish.

But in Spain this is all different. There is no Spanish devil abroad—yet. There are foreign devils enough in Spain, however, American, British, German. They put up signs beside the roads. They display coloured tracts in cafés, that announce the kingdom of heaven for all Spanish farmers who till their broad but lean acres with implements made by Krupp of Essen, who has beaten howitzers into dung forks. Moreover, at a slight additional cost, the Fräulein's firm will sweeten the kingdom and fatten the lean acres with an excellent nitrate of soda from Stassfurt. On the opposite wall of the café is a gentle counterblast, a polite offer of a more subtly aromatic heaven to those who appreciate the true quality of Chilean nitrate of soda, which, after all, is not really Chilean but British. Almost, it tempts a Britisher to shout "*Hoch das Fräulein!*" But away with such nonsense. There's a river in front of us now, a broad, brawling river with an iron bridge across it and a park along the bank!

What river? The *Ga*llego. Our map was rumpled and we got the name wrong, called it the Ga*lle*gos, this shallow, sandy river, and we wondered whatever it could have to do with Galicia, where the people call themselves "Gallegos." But this river comes down from the high Pyrenees, from the Spanish side of passes far above the shrine of Lourdes in France, and it remains in Aragon throughout its course. Its valley, indeed, cuts through the Sierra de Alcubierre and opens the north, and France, for Zaragoza, and through Zaragoza for Castile. Down it come rail and road and canal, from Pyreneean Aragon to Zaragoza, the capital. Too important a river to be misnamed, this Rio Gállego.

The iron bridge was not elegant, but some of the brick piers and arches of an older, nobler bridge to the north remained—a monumental rebuke to it. However, as an iron bridge, it behaved consistently. The Gállego slid away southward under it, to join the

Ebro unimpeded, not far below the city—and slid away from us, for we saw it no more. And, at the other side, we stepped at once on to the paved, urban road, at the tramway terminus. Bridge of despatch, of convenience, and oblivion! "Forget what's behind you," it would seem to say. "Forget even me, once you've used me—I'm ugly!"

Along the paved road there were jangling trams, bumping cyclists, jolting carts. There were trees, factories, shops, drinking dens, frowsy houses, and insolent people who stared at oddly dressed strangers. A group of girls tittered at us openly, and drew the attention of other girls to our defects and peculiarities. The proprietors of cafés frowned from their doorways, until, in our excess of thirst and indignation, we laid the curse upon all their beer, with bell, book, and candle. Three kilometres of it, straight, dusty, cobbled thoroughfare, mean and irritating, but we endured it patiently and proudly, for had we not seen towers from afar?

Its only relief was an occasional glimpse over the roofs, to a huge, square tabernacle of a building away out in the open desert of high lands to the north. We never understood that lonely, distant institution; never went there, nor ever asked about it. Why?

But, at length, Ebro; a grand bridge; and beyond it the real city! Disappointing? Yes, in some ways, with that first view of Zaragoza we were disappointed. The great "Holy metropolitan Church of el Pilar" raised and thrust a confused, aspiring mass of domes and towers, cupolas and pinnacles and gables, above the sombre trees beside the river. The green within the creamy, zig-zag stripes of the tiling of the flat, lesser domes; the opaque milkiness of colour in the shiny tiles, were disappointing at first. But from the whole city there rose such a profusion of towers as the most ardent phallic-worshipper could desire.

Ebro, swift and slender here around the city, silent and unreflecting, between high banks of garden-green, with skirting esplanade, and the old, grave shade of trees. A light suspension bridge to south, not ungraceful. And our own bridge, massive, handsome, lifted high on strong arches of uneven span, of different forms. Once across, we turned, sought a place aside and leaned over the wall, to learn the heavy, uneven rhythm of those arches that span the formidable sweep of Ebro; of those great piers of old masonry, older than the arches, that must have stood untrembling in the floods from half the watersheds and melting snows of northern Spain, year upon year resisting yet never holding time.

At Toledo, after the journey was over, we saw the Puente de Alcántara, which rises from the antiquity of Roman piers to throw a lofty stone span across the gorge of the Tagus. Germane to this heavier bridge of Zaragoza. Things nearly indomitable. And in them both an entity of being, communicated or transmitted to them like a spirit from the labour that built them.

It is in all things built with hands for common service and for constant use, and it remains in them, their life as it were, strong or weak only as the strength that begot them, and it remains only for such time as the need for their use endures.

The bridge of Alcántara and the bridge of Zaragoza may both have been breached by flood or bombardment again and again, in the shocks of time, but the strength of life in their own roots, in their massive and steadfast piers, has raised them again, will raise them, that life, through their life, may surmount the sweeping flow of rivers, outwit, for its time, the slow, external certainties of secular decay.

These bridges—it is possible, at rare moments, to discern the spirit of such things—will stand, faithful to the integrity that made them strong, bearing their stream of traffic day by day, until the need of them is gone; until life withdraws from them, draws out of them. Then they will die. And gladly then, they will fall into stone and rubble and rust—earth yielded back to the overpowering earth and its waters; dead as the Pyramids.

We leaned over the wall, and because there is no eternity it seemed enough to gaze at a fine bridge for ten minutes that we might remember it for life. But ten minutes were enough: we were profane persons with a city at our disposal, a city ready to clamour at us with bells, although its bells were silent at the time. We plunged into its network of streets, and at once, as if a portcullis had dropped behind us, we felt separated from the influence of the rivers and forgot them.

In cities men think little about rivers and much about buying and selling. In spite of our intense enjoyment of the beauty of bridges a few moments before, we thought much about buying beer—the only thing we wanted to buy—nor do I believe that certain of the so-called "low" tastes are at all incompatible with finer ones. The enjoyment of beauty is, after all, the satisfaction of an intellectual appetite, that of beer of a bodily appetite; and who is to say that there is any line of division between what the body feels and what the mind feels?

In Paris, you remember, we used to patronise the *bistros*, the little dram shops in side streets, with the sign "Débit de Boissons—Licensed to sell Drinks," and we used to call them "dirty debits." Within two minutes we had found a genuine dirty debit in Zaragoza, and were sitting on a bench drinking beer of quality. We drank it slowly, French fashion, and were punished for our incorrigible self-indulgence by the descent of rain. A heavy shower. We ordered another beer, and felt ready to contend with the weather on those terms indefinitely, but the rain did not last. The clear, clean air outside left us no excuse at all for further delay, and we had been delaying, putting off a difficulty, in our most characteristic manner. We are both dilatory and we both admit it. So dilatory that we don't even talk about the troublesome problem that we know to be uppermost in our minds, until the moment when time forces us into decision.

I am sure that we had both been thinking about a difficulty awaiting us in Zaragoza, as far back as Puebla de Alfinden, but we said nothing about it until we started to walk out of the dirty debit. We paused at the door. "Which way will we go, right or left?" asked one.

"Doesn't matter much," replied the other; so we went to the left, slowly tugging admissions out of each other like tickets from a slot machine.

"Pretty big city, this?"

"Yes."

"Didn't expect anything as bright as those flower-beds back in the square there."

"No."

"Ought to be plenty of hotels in a place like this."

"Should be."

"Noticed any, so far—any likely ones?"

"No."

"Well—what d'you think we ought to do?"

"Tell you what I suggest. Let's keeping walking straight on and we'll take the first likely one we see, regardless."

"I'm with you, Cyrano!"

The first "likely one" was the first one we came to, and it had all those external attributes that we most approved: a plain front, a modest appearance, an absence of display, and an air of inviting the traveller to relax in comfort without the fear of having to pay for luxury.

We turned to open the door, but somewhat to our astonishment it opened for us, unobtrusively, and we passed inside. Before we really understood what was happening an inner door had opened quietly, in an ushering manner to which we responded instinctively, and we found ourselves in a large vestibule talking in English with a suave and quite irresistible maître d'hôtel. The English made any dignified retreat almost impossible, for how could we consult each other about it? I had a feeble, stillborn temptation to ask for the Duke of Bedford, and to withdraw gracefully on being told that he was not there, but I believe that the maître d'hôtel could have conjured up *a* Duke of Bedford with a triumphant "Voilà, Monsieur!" I looked at you for suggestion or support, and found them, for your expression said many things. It said: "It's a long way, and a long time, between Foix and Zaragoza." (Yes—Foix was two hundred and thirty miles behind us, a fortnight back in the past.) It said: "There's a bank in Zaragoza." It said: "Let's never admit to the Hotel Universo that we've been fairly trapped. Straighten up your shoulders like a man who's not going to be satisfied with anything but the best, and we'll take possession of the place."

We carried it off rather well, I think. Two gentlemen on a walking tour, gentlemen who want nothing but the best, inscribed themselves with great formality (one room), and ordered hot baths to be made ready at once. But our false balance was nearly overthrown when, on being conducted to our room, we were asked to step into *the lift!* The lift, the elevator as you called it. We had completely forgotten the existence of such things. Over the whole distance of seven hundred and three miles between Paris and Zaragoza we had not seen or thought of a lift once. Yet here we were, in the ancient capital of the Kingdom of Aragon, disreputable and shabby, but ascending, up and up and up, right to the second floor, in a lift. Wonderful!

It reminded us of dinner suits, cocktails, dancing pumps, manicuring and shampooing, hors d'œuvres, taxis, reserved seats, women in evening dress, orchestras. Which was the better part of our kind of life, that, or this clear-eyed vagabondage among the hills and fields and villages? Room there was for doubt, yet we had no doubt which we preferred, in our freedom from collar studs and rebellious evening ties, appointments, haste, stuffiness, inane conversation, the flabby boredom of good living. But comfort is not to be wholly condemned. We accepted the comfort of the Hotel Universo as a justifiable if unforeseen indulgence, exactly as we had accepted the comfort of the Hôtel de la Barbacane at Foix.

Our room, plain, adequately furnished, overlooked what had been a large courtyard that was now roofed in with glass on the level of the floor below us. A palm court, a ballroom, or perhaps a large dining room down there, we thought. How inappropriate a setting it all was for ourselves as we looked then! We lay down on our white beds and laughed at the way we had let this hotel take possession of us; laughed at our lumpy, dirty packs over there—so unlike travellers' luggage. And presently there came a knock at the door. A matronly *criada*, full of line and full of a quiet, lively amiability, announced that the bath was ready and asked if one of the gentlemen would follow her. A criada is half-way between a femme de chambre and a housekeeper, but is too old, as a rule, to be called a chamber maid, so that there is nothing that expresses her properly in English.

I followed the criada to a large, white bathroom equipped with shiny, modern devices, one of which was a commodious and complicated bidet that sprayed hot water upwards like a fountain. The criada gave me a sumptuous towel the size of a mainsail, as well as a couple of smaller towels, and was so attentive that I began to wonder if it were the custom in Zaragoza for gentlemen to be bathed by lady attendants, as gentlemen mostly are, up to the age of seven or eight. But no. She withdrew, smiling indulgently, and I was alone with the bidet. Um. "Let me have women about me that are fat." How fat they must be in Spain, if that porcelain "article of virtue" was of average dimensions.

It is one of the penalties of civilised man that he cannot escape from his civilisation: and it is one of the charms of that civilisation that no reasonable civilised man ever wants to escape from all of it. There are bath tubs, good plumbing, "the benison of hot water," soap, and the caress of towels, for instance. I gave myself up to these things—to the surroundings called "bathroom," because they presented themselves in their best form, nearly in the sanitary perfection of their development, at the Hotel Universo. As I coated myself with an icing—or was it whipped cream?—of white lather, I made comparisons.

Five days ago I had bathed in the Segre. Six days ago I had also bathed in the Segre, given up, each time, to the surroundings called "nature." I could not honestly persuade myself that I had not enjoyed it; indeed, there was nothing to persuade me honestly that I had enjoyed it a whit less than this real bath. How then, if offered the choice, would I choose between a "bathe" and a bath? Here, in a bath, I was undoubtedly casting my vote for the unanimous opinion of all those English gentlemen who proclaim that "there's nothing like a good tub." But there's nothing like a good swim either—nothing at all.

The choice, it seemed to me, would depend first of all upon the occasion. On a frosty morning or at the end of a hard day, any bathroom that offered really hot water would dissuade me from swimming. If, on the other hand, the advantages were equal, the best bathroom in the world (it would actually be in America in this instance) would not dissuade me from swimming. Again, I can choose my own exact bathing place, and so make a swim an expression of myself, but I cannot always choose my bathroom, and an uncomfortable bathroom does not invite me. I shun it, and prefer to go unwashed.

It seems then, that I will accept the best that civilisation has to offer, and find it good indeed—find it not better, but more acceptable on certain occasions than what nature has to offer, if nature have anything of the kind to offer. But from uncomfortable bathrooms, cheap automobiles, inefficient telephones, imperfect radio installations, canned food, soda fountains, popular music, and the tens of thousands of machine-made substitutes for good things, I will politely and readily withdraw in favour of an eager multitude that does not yet know the difference. But I did not withdraw from the bathroom until I had exhausted its power to delight me.

I found you shaved and ready to go to the bath. I found, too, that you had made your ritual criticism of a certain ineffectiveness that is inherent in me, by sharpening the razor for me. How you can make it so sharp I will never understand, for when I treat it in what seems to be the same way I only make in blunter and I curse it for a useless, machine-made, modern article. I would gladly retain you as Master of the Blades, for this one, daily service, could I afford it.

While you were in the bath it rained heavily, and the glass roof in the courtyard boomed and rattled, and sprouted all over with rebounding splashes like a windswept flower bed full of the young, bursting blades of bulbs. The explosive energy of splashing, the short leaps of water reflected into the air, as the heavy strands of rain melted their ends everywhere over the hard glass roof, seemed to concentrate some principle—the slow bursting into life of scattered seeds in garden soil—to compress into minutes an intense, hidden process of weeks, and to make it violent: as if every streak and strand of the rain were a string of hard beads, or of dry seeds, or a fine chain, drawn swiftly, and rattling, right through the vibrating roof. The sound, a static diapason of crowded agitation, remained level, steady, banded and threaded with different values and qualities of harmony and discord, like the banded fusion of colour and patch and mark on a drum or a disc or a wheel that is revolving so swiftly as to appear to be still, yet held so by some droning form of energy. Level, the sound; static, the energy; and steady, the violence of this rain on a glass roof, as if its volume had been regulated—as if, for a given time, so many gallons of rain, nor more nor less, must fall in a minute. And where were they going to, those steadily pouring gallons? It seemed that the courtyard ought to fill until the roof crashed in to drop the bulky weight of a flood into the ground floor of the hotel. But the roof shed the water from glistening slopes and it ran harmlessly away. Down and tortuously, through the intricate, black sewers of Zaragoza. Down, to Ebro. Contributory volume from our own hotel.

It was still raining after I had shaved and you had returned shiny and scented from the bath: and it rained for a whole hour, thick, heavy rain that hid the growth of evening and left us, when it abruptly ceased, in the mature darkness of night. We were tired enough, relaxed enough after the hot bath, to rest on our beds until dinner time.

There was a banquet at the hotel that night and we had therefore to dine in a small room upstairs. White and gold surroundings, and fruit on epergnes, and the polite hush. The severity of a bare, polished floor, and light walls without adornment, suggested the first meal in a newly occupied mansion where things have only been temporarily arranged. We came under the scrutiny of a noble lady at a far table, who seemed quite unable to discern that, beneath our very shabby clothes, ourselves were very clean. We suspected the lady of being English, as were perhaps a dozen other diners. From what country could that fresh clarity of complexion, that floating of the whole, true personality on the surface of expression, have come, if the girls at the big table were not English? Only the polite hush prevented us from being sure—or, did it not rather make us sure? For it too accompanies the English wherever they go.

There is little of the meal itself that I remember, perhaps because, within the limitations of supply, good hotels serve the same kinds of meals all over the world. But we drank, for the first time, red "Bodegas Bilbaínas," a light, thin, and palatable wine from the green and rainy Biscayan region of Spain, bottled, as the label said, at Bilbao and Haro. Later, we found this, and the similar "Bodegas Iberia," to be popular lunch and dinner wines in Castile, and we came to appreciate their light, unintoxicating quality ourselves, in Madrid and elsewhere. This night, in Zaragoza, we drank only half the bottle. Before we rose from dinner our waiter asked the number of our room, corked the wine up, and wrote the number on the label, evidently so that he might put the bottle aside for our next meal.

I had not met with this custom before, but you remembered having seen the same thing done in an hotel at le Havre. I have seen it since, in Italy, where some tourists order large flasks of Chianti and take several days to consume it. They seem unable to tell that the wine is sour on the second day, and I often wonder if it be not this very dullness of taste, this bluntness of perception, that makes so many of the jarring things of modern life—no, of life, merely—not only tolerable, but actually pleasant to numbers of people.

After dinner we went, for the first time, out into Zaragoza.

Already we seemed to have been in the city for a long while, yet we knew nothing of it. The night was dark overhead, with the clear darkness of black satin. The streets were bright and lively, and they seemed to welcome us, not as in a strange, foreign place, but as in a familiar place—the streets of a Spanish town, already known in parts of Lérida, Balaguer, Séo. But here they were wider, opener, the façades low on either hand—were indeed different. But their people, their styles of shops, their spirit of activity, if not the same, were familiar. We walked at random and found a large square.

The café we selected was in the south-east corner and was nearly full, which pleased you greatly, and room was made for us at a table along an inner wall. Here, for the first time in Spain, we were served coffee with milk, *cafe con leche*, and it was served thus, as we found later, nearly everywhere over the rest of the way to Madrid. True, even in Zaragoza we could have had black coffee with the usual glass of clear, cold water, and in Madrid we often asked for it that way, but between Zaragoza and Madrid they served it with milk, unless we ordered it otherwise.

Excepting the places on the boulevards, frequented by foreigners or students, I have seldom seen a Parisian café so crowded as this one in the corner of the square. And how different the crowd, from anything Parisian or French! Here they were all men, youngish men, an assembly that could almost be called one of youth. They all wore bérets, mostly the tight béret basque, though here and there was a floppy béret alpin, and the effect of so many little round black caps made me think, as I looked across the crowded room, of crochets and quavers that had run away from the score of a concerto to play truant for a while here, where each could make its own sound just when it liked; and they were all buzzing together, making, not music, but a continual, complex, and uniform sound of life, like the rain this evening. A serious animation, that was neither rowdy nor subdued, gave a sense of some intelligent social appetite that was being properly satisfied. Everyone here was in a state of keen enjoyment, and at the same time in a state of sane self-possession. What were they doing, these youngish men—what were they enjoying?

Certainly, they were not killing time or relieving boredom. The mental activity in the room was too voluntarily dynamic for that.

They were not playing games nor reading newspapers. They were all drinking coffee and they were all in discussion, interested in discussion, and there was vigour and health in it. They were, in fact, enjoying the art of conversation, which is almost a lost art in my country and yours, and there was a mental virility about them, about the quiet energy they were able to put into the interchange of ideas on different levels of thought, that was almost infectious. There were light encounters, witty conversations, and philosophical debates of manœuvre, among groups of four, five, six people—so much one could tell from their expressions—and they were all finding it enjoyable, even exhilarating.

This was evidently the way in which many young men of Zaragoza spend long hours after dinner, in practising the fine art of conversation with each other, which is one of the best, most thorough ways of getting to know and to understand men, people: by exploring their thought. And they enjoyed it enough to crowd into this café. The waiters and the limpiabotas man moved between the tables all the time, but the scene hardly changed while we were there. A few people left the café. Numbers entered. We stayed there for a long time and found ourselves growing quietly alert, observant, stimulated, as it were, by the atmosphere of the room. At last we went back to the hotel to bed, to be woken in the morning by somebody pushing a folded document under the door.

We had arrived in Zaragoza on a Sunday, and this insertion of a sheet of paper under the door brought into Monday morning that old feeling of the tyranny of affairs, the inevitable, heedless discipline of work that must be resumed in a bright world that says "Come out and enjoy me!" The document was a request from the post office, to call there for registered mail. I expected nothing at the post office; had arranged not to let post offices worry me between Toulouse and Madrid; so it must be for you. Anyway, we must go to the post office—and to the bank this morning.

I thought of trains and ferryboats out at home in Sydney, the 8.26 and the 8.15, always harder to "catch" on Mondays than on other mornings. Really, we should learn to look upon the week as beginning, not as ending, with Sunday, and should keep Saturday as the day of rest, the Sabbath.

Sunday, on this journey, brought us, it seemed, to the delightful and important places, to large towns and little cities. Yesterday, our sixth Sunday on the road, had brought us to Zaragoza, and we had arrived at Foix on a Sunday; spent Sunday, or part of it, in Guéret, and Cahors. And there is other evidence to prove that you and I, when together, are destined to encounter an unusual number of "lucky Sundays," which is evidence, of course, for a valid hypothesis of purpose in coincidences. But this was Monday, and you were quite anxious to take that form to the post office.

We went down, to breakfast in a small, bare dining room on the ground floor, where we drank coffee and ate perfectly baked rolls, brown and crisp outside, soft and fresh within, and we had butter on them, real butter, "manteca de vaca—cows' butter," as a boy had called it in a shop somewhere along the road—at Pons, I think. The boy used the expression only to show us that he had heard of the commodity, and this was our first real butter in Spain. Perfectly baked as we thought the rolls to be, they did not entirely please a Spaniard at a neighbouring table, who felt them critically, called for another basketful, and selected two in such a discriminating way that we felt there must be "points" to rolls that we did not understand. It made me wonder if I were not like some of those people I have mentioned, who are satisfied with inferior things because they don't know that they are not good things. Not very like them, however.

During breakfast I wondered about your interest in the post office, because there was evidently more to it than unexpected registered mail. We found the place without trouble, and we talked on the way there, of the extraordinary efficiency of a postal system so quickly informed of the registrations at hotels that it could notify strangers of awaiting mail the day after their arrival in the city. Unfortunately, we had to modify our opinion of the system.

The parcel, as it proved to be, was for neither of us—there had been a mistake "on the part of the hotel." Nor was there any mail for you at the poste restante. So—you had been looking forward to letters in Zaragoza ever since we left Foix, and had said not a word about it! And now, the first thing on a Monday morning, you were disappointed! I like you less when you are disappointed, because—well, you don't blame me as to the cause of it, but you look out across a nasty world and you see me in it, quite close.

Better for this day had you mentioned that you expected mail at Zaragoza, when I might have understood how sharp the disappointment really was. But I knew nothing of your arrangements, and I looked upon your enquiry as one of casual hope, and upon the absence of letters as a thing of no consequence. The result was that I made mistakes all day. When we arrived in Madrid nine days later and I received a fat bundle of letters that included the best news that had come to me for years, you still received nothing. I understood, by that time, that the failure of news was both painful and serious for you.

However, if we got no letters in Zaragoza, we remembered that we could still write letters ourselves, and we bought postage stamps. Once again Zaragoza showed us a thing we had never seen before. The girl at the stamp counter tore a piece off a newspaper and carefully wrapped the stamps up in it before handing them to me! Rush hours must be unknown in a city that can observe so engaging a custom.

We went next to the bank, which was also easy to find, though certain things in it were not easy to find. They examined my letter of credit from Sydney, declared it to be genuine and negotiable, and then made an unsuccessful search for the blank facsimile of the form of letter deposited with them by the Sydney bank. As it could not be found they assured me that they were not correspondents of my bank in Sydney, and could not deal with me.

This was serious. In it lay the possibility of our defeat—without money we could not reach Madrid on foot. I checked the list of banks given in the letter of credit, and pointed to the name of their bank, which was precisely and correctly designated in print. I requested that they search again for the missing facsimile forms. Indeed, I strove to give the impression that I would wait while they searched the bank from the strong-room to the lavatory, rather than go away without money.

Eventually the forms were found, where they had looked for them first, and, on their comparison with my letter, the chief cashier came over and said very sternly, in good English, "We will pay you in pesetas." I told him that, as pounds were of no use to me in Spain, pesetas were exactly what I wanted, and they paid me in pesetas, fifty pesetas short! We counted it again. Yes, fifty pesetas short! You said "Goddam!" or something like it. No—it's Henri who says "Goddam!" You say "Fizzle!" However, the bank rectified the mistake, with too bright a shade of alacrity, too light a shade of apology, to please us, and we walked out, you uttering an emphatic "No!" to a remark of mine concerning dollars to be changed. You would change no dollars at that bank—or that bank would not change dollars for you, I forget which.

You walked, instead, into another bank across the street, where our few remaining dollars were changed. They were our last reserve of ready money that was not Spanish. Our last? No. In my wallet I had a pound note and a ten shilling note, which got us, ultimately, out of Spain; saved us, in fact, until we arrived in Bordeaux, where the Sydney bank had another of its scattered correspondents. To have a letter of credit in one's pocket and no "correspondent" within reach is quite as bad as to have no money at all.

When we had finished with the post office and the banks Monday morning lost its tyrannical feeling, and we were at liberty.

A sunny morning in the green shade of the city—for Zaragoza has left in me a permanent impression in colour. Whether it be due to the green tiles on the domes of the church of el Pilar, or to the sombre groves along the river, I do not know. Neither do I know the predominating hue of the city itself. But when I think of it, it is green, or brown, that warm, deep, greenish brown of certain copses at the end of winter, the richest bass note in the canvases of van Dyck and Constable.

The whole feeling of a city can clear, in the memory, into one colour: Paris, leaden grey; Geneva, slate-green; Salamanca, cold buff; Toledo, dazzling white; Perth, in Australia, bottle-green: hues that are not colour of the place, but colour evoked by remembered feeling of the place, and a mental clarification, a disentanglement of wisps and threads and knots of perception and half-perception, woven deep in the mind by the drag of time and the pressure of added life, and dyed to the full value of the hours that received and stored them, until, in the end, a name, the name of a place, brings one simple colour into which its whole significance has merged. Zaragoza—brownish green. Seaweed. A tang. How everything follows, and the hue, in turn, evokes the place!

Bright morning, and remembered shade in curving streets that are neither narrow nor tortuous, nor yet are they dark and shut-in. They bend, gently, and seem to curl into near, hidden distance, to wrap themselves around masses of low buildings, as if the whole city were coiled within a bounding circle. A deceptive impression, for the core of Zaragoza has preserved the criss-cross, Roman plan, and these streets are nearly straight. There are many straight streets, diameters, radii, and spokes that project beyond a rim that does not exist.

And for every length of shaded wall and pavement there is a sunny length opposed, for the buildings are spread, not reared, in this Aragonese capital. Two and three stories high—as in Bujaraloz. Old and finished and worn smooth with use are kerb and cobble and paved surface. There are no gaps in façades, there is no disharmony of new fronts or of modernised buildings. It is all mature, vigorously mellow, and worn by hard, active, daily use; untouched, in its brisk and healthy life, by decay. It is tidy, clean, and even bright. Shop windows glitter, bright as the eyes of pedestrians who walk past with assurance and purpose.

Unexpectedly, streets lead into, or open into, small squares and open spaces where there are trees, horse-chestnuts in shady leaf, grass plots with seats, and prim flower beds, fresh and formal, unbesmirched by dust or smoke, veritable gardens tended with care. The flower beds concentrate an intense brilliance into these tiny patches that are so small a part of the spread of the city.

They are little places where the big place cherishes a glowing seclusion, and the flowers themselves are chosen, as if the local taste would have it that way, from the warmest layers of richness. Borders of pansies, velvet-brown and black, violet and yellow; rows of proud stocks, fragrant, snow-white; petunias, wine-purple, and crushed plum soaked with white; pungent marigolds; and wallflowers, vividly brown and thickly yellow. All the hues are opaque, heavy, thick, even to the whites, which are the dense white of porcelain or feathers. In other beds are begonias, bold in their broad simplicity of leaf as cabbages, yet fine in their conformity of shape and dull pattern as a cultured caste. They bear, in pink, waxen delicacy, a modest perfection of choice blooms that rise from the stiff plants like the neck and cheeks of an Infanta by Velazquez above the braided corsage and the simple, spreading elaboration of her hooped and quilted robe. Heavily, thickly, deeply rich are these flowers of Zaragoza, and there are just enough of them.

Were they spread in open acres and wide parks they would not burn as in their contrast with matte walls here. Were they heaped and piled for carnival they would not so proclaim the spirit of the place, as in their gay, contemplative retirement here.

It is good to gather bright things together in quiet places, if the things themselves be good; to turn inward to them for slow joy and peaceful gazing. Let them be rich and bright enough, and few will suffice. Let no excessive abundance dull and overpower the need for them. Few, then, will suffice, always.

Above the lustreless mass of this centre of a city, above the bright squares; indeed, in some places from their very sides, rise the towers. To every church a tower, a belfry, and to nearly every tower a church. They are built of warm, brown brick or of yellow stone or of stone carried upward from a pedestal of brick, these towers, and they are square, hexagonal, octagonal, ornate or plain, and in the top of each the bells are exposed to sight. They were not hung inside the towers, those bells of Zaragoza, but they hang in full view, in apertures in the upper walls; or from iron frames on the very tops of the towers: and we record with regret that their voices, when we heard them during the day and night, were less musical than we would have had them. They were rung "crazily," without rhythm, in a way to irritate the ear and mind, as were the bells of les Cabannes, Foix, and Varilhes. But we had great joy of the towers.

Nearly all church towers are the distant cousins of minarets, and these decorative towers of Zaragoza are even closer kin, for many of them were built by the christianised Moors of the old kingdom of Aragon, and the Moorish christian, working in his own medium of moslem brick, raised his work to the rank of a style of architecture. They call it *mudéjar* in Aragon, this intricate building in brick, wherein the moslem hexagon and octagon combine with the round or pointed arch of the christian; wherein a wall is regarded as a thing to decorate by every device and with every pattern that is possible to the simple geometry of bricks. The sides of the towers were treated as panels, to be recessed around windows and apertures, or to be ornamented with patterns, a honeycomb of shallow, regular cavities, or to be made dazzling with insets of bright, glazed tiles. Most of the tiles have disappeared and the honeycomb patterns have weathered here and there to a rough irregularity while time has been wearing on the city, but their beauty has matured like old lace.

There is no baffling interweaving of maze-like arabesques in these mudéjar patterns; no jointed interlacing nor convoluted curling of a few continuous lines that run endlessly through and into a close monotony of design. These are not like the Moorish patterns, wherein one line captures the eye, leads it, holds it, hypnotises it with the beauty of a mathematical intricacy that makes contemplation of a decorated surface a profound spiritual quest with an absolute quality, and the experience almost voluptuous on account of the insistent, close repetition of exquisite rhythms of delicacy. The mudéjar patterns are simple, pretty, plainly geometrical, and without theme. A mohammedan, a Moor, would perhaps call them degraded and barbaric, and might see in them a corruption of Moorish art through christian influence, the decadent vestiges of an art that was full of vitality in the moslem Zaragoza of the eleventh century. But the mind that can fill a plain surface with a simple yet lovely pattern understands balance and proportion, and for us this use of brick, these patterns, these tiles, are a delightful infusion of exotic into familiar forms, harmoniously combined into something that is neither Moorish nor christian, but is admirably and characteristically Spanish.

Some of the towers were carried higher, or were rebuilt on mudéjar bases, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in the "classical" style of the renaissance, and they have a smooth elegance. This break without shock, from the mudéjar to the renaissance, gives to Zaragoza a character of appearance that was almost unique among the European cities I had known up to that time.

It appears to be a city untouched by gothic influence. It seemed, indeed, that Zaragoza must have been hostile to gothic architecture. Here or there, the tracery of a late, pointed and moulded window in an ancient church, loses itself, sinks into insignificance among classical scrolls and mudéjar patterns, and hides, as it were, from the tan corduroy of half-round tiles on the flat gables of the roof. I have read somewhere of a Spanish patron of building who proclaimed: "Nada de gótico!—We'll have no gothic!"—doubtless an Aragonese, and from Zaragoza itself, for the city is outwardly ungothic. Not until we entered churches did we find gothic naves, broad, ogival arches, heavy and displeasing, and alien to the place.

We did not enter churches immediately after leaving the bank. We walked around Zaragoza somewhat aimlessly that morning, satisfied to inhale the life and interest of the place rather than to study it. We found things, instead of seeking them. The lovely front of a school for girls in a quiet street—we stood before that for a long time, wondering how they educate girls in Spain; wondering, for my part, what it would be like to have Spanish friends of the class that sends its daughters to such a school; feeling, too, as I did in France, how little we were seeing, how little we knew, the cultured society of these countries. Not far from the school was an old, handsome church of warm brown brick, with a tiled roof and pretentious portal added or remodelled during the classical period. Most unfortunately, we went in there, to find an interior spoilt by a crowd of bad images and a profusion of tawdry gilt.

We are too prone to basing general opinions on particular instances, and we walked out of the church hating the interiors of all Spanish churches; believing that they were all "cluttered up" like the poorer churches in France. Only at one other place had we entered a church in Spain, the dark little church at Orgañá, obscure as a cave, and we felt sure, now, that Spanish churches were not worth the trouble of entering. We were to learn better, after the journey was over, when we discovered, particularly in Salamanca, Toledo, and Burgos, that the fine churches of Spain are as austerely chaste within as the Calvinistic cathedrals of Switzerland; when we discovered their excellence of woodwork, the smooth beauty of plain pews and pulpits of mellow walnut; when we understood the concentration of all their richness into a reredos of magnificent, sterling gold that filled the chancel with a background of heavy glory—wealth of the Indies, in its final dedication to the Lord. But these things were in Castile and León. In Aragon they are less austere, less pure in style, more sinfully adorned.

The over-decorated church sent us out to look for grass plots and flower beds. The heavy fumes of its incense reminded us that water from far mountains flows past the heedless city that looks nowhere towards the rivers from within. We sought the embankment along the Ebro, near the church of el Pilar, to watch the current, if there were nothing else to watch; to observe the variety of colour on the surface of water that is muddy brown in depth.

But the river presented us with an actual entertainment—one of those punts worked by the current, that we had seen from a distance below Castellnou de Basella, and above Pons, on the Segre. It was coming slowly across from the opposite bank, and was full of fat market women, handkerchiefs tied around their heads, and baskets on their laps. The punt and its mechanism were simple: a long, heavy barge, held by a line from the bow to a cable fixed across the river, the line from the bow ending in a pulley that ran freely along the cable. The helm of the barge, as it moved towards us, was hard over to port, so that the barge itself lay obliquely across the current, slanting across the river, with the bow pointing towards the side it was approaching—our side. The pressure of the current on the starboard side pushed the whole thing, barge and running line, steadily to port, straight across the river, the pulley running smoothly on the taut cable. The punt made the crossing of about a hundred and fifty yards in about five minutes, the market women clambered ashore, a few passengers got on board, and, with a simple reversal of the helm to starboard, it moved out again to recross gently—economically.

Since that day I have seen another punt of the kind, at Baschi in Italy, where the Tiber makes brown haste through the rocky barrens of Umbria; and I have been told that there is one on the Rhine at Bâle. So cheap and simple a kind of ferry must, one would suppose, be in use on many swift rivers in many parts of the world.

While I was engrossed with the working of the punt, you had been keeping a seedy-looking individual under observation in such a way that neither he nor I was aware of it. He was standing, or lounging, on the far side of the street behind us, carefully studying us, and at length, believing himself unnoticed, he drifted across the street and leaned over the wall beside us. You had predicted the move while reporting him, and by agreement we ourselves moved off, just at the moment when he thought his approach as good as made. We walked away, apparently unconscious of his movements or presence, and went towards the Lonja. This, the only questionable encounter of the whole journey, and really no encounter at all, shows how safe the common world has been made for us in these unchivalrous times. Safe, and dull, the common world—unless people walk to Madrid.

The Lonja—the Exchange—occupied our attention only for a few minutes. Plain as a box outside, it has nevertheless considerable beauty within. There is an Arabian or Moorish feeling in the open, rectangular hall, where the tiles are a foot square and the slim pillars that support the roof are out of plumb. But the gothic groining of the roof, the small but ornate capitals, the heraldic and cherubic decoration of mouldings, the blazonry of a "black letter" inscription that runs like a frieze in red and gold around the walls, and the great coat of arms at the inner end, bring it elegantly into the world of the griffon and the unicorn. Small tables, with a chair to each, regularly spaced over the whole floor, looked so in keeping with the hall that we asked if they were original woodwork of the period. "No," replied the attendant, "quite modern, but in harmony, no es?" In harmony certainly, but—the people who sit there, in sac suits and felt hats?

The Lonja is at the back of the Santo Templo Metropolitano del Pilar, so we did the obvious thing, and went there. The great church is like its official title, pretentious and imposing. Heavily classical, youngest, largest, and least beautiful of the fine edifices of Zaragoza, it had the same effect on me as St. Paul's Cathedral. Once inside I said to myself "This is a palatial, not an ecclesiastical building." Cold, empty, and richly adorned, it seemed like a gesture towards magnificence rather than true magnificence. Too much roundness of arches, of domes, and of heavily carved oak. Too much fluting, of columns, railings, and organ pipes. Too much bad painting, on canvases and fresco panels. Too much baroque detail to permit the eye to rest anywhere. And clean, not from the absence of dirt, but from the absence of living warmth.

It is true that we entered the church of el Pilar with prejudice, and we made a great mistake in doing so. The church is rich, stored with beautiful things, many of them much older than itself, but to see them with appreciation required more time than we had to give. We were, indeed, in the common difficulty of tourists. We were in the presence of a multitude of lovely things, each one to be known, loved, only after long contemplation of it. But we did not try, as many tourists do, to see everything, give to each object a dutiful, hurried glance, taking its reputed merit for granted, allowing time to defeat our understanding, and haste to fill our minds with a confused record of imperfect impressions. We tried, rather, to take some simple wholeness from any intricate thing before us—to see well, and to remember well, a little, the little we had time to see, leaving the rest of a world too rich for us, feeling that others would bear their understanding to what we could not see.

For example, you remember that when we allowed ourselves one hurried day in Toledo after this journey, the day was given to looking objectively at the city and its surroundings, and the site and aspect of Toledo, the appearance of its buildings and streets, were enough to occupy us all day. Yet, the finest pictures of el Greco are in Toledo, and they make the city one of pilgrimage. I knew that the pictures of el Greco were there, but I expressed no desire to see them—for how could we possibly see them in a day? It was well that we did not see them, because, at that time, neither of us had the understanding to appreciate el Greco, and we would certainly have condemned ourselves for opinionated and ignorant prigs by declaring that his work is poor and its reputation another example of "bunk."

It took me two years to pass from the stage of artistic education in which we found ourselves in Madrid, when Velazquez was our highest enthusiasm, to the discovery of el Greco, which I made in London. Better, I feel, to have come slowly to understand something of the greatness of two canvases, than to have been blinded to it by the hasty misjudgment of a hundred; and I do not regret Toledo, which is still there.

And in this church of el Pilar there were things that we missed. Some of them we should not have missed but we did not know that they were there. Others had to be missed, on account of time. But, in this instance, I regret the things I did not know were there. One panel by Goya—but we closed our eyes to frescoes after the disappointment of their general effect; and—would we have understood Goya, at that time?

The church itself has an almost perfect unity of style, an exceptional thing in Zaragoza, where styles are mixed, impure, and every period has left a seal of addition or alteration on the churches. But the church of el Pilar is comparatively young, built during the first phases of the decadence of architecture, and it grandly failed. One would suppose it to be a sound structure, so heavy is its unity, but a whole section of the roof is already under the support of a network of structural steel, a permanent reinforcement, painted a dull green like the walls, unsightly, and rendering a great space useless.

People were entering and leaving the church, to join or depart from a service that was being held in one of the chapels, where three or four score of persons only emphasised the cold emptiness of the building. A verger conducted a tourist around behind the rood screen, where there was some exquisite woodwork, not to show him the woodwork, but to uncover a small picture. And, most real thing of all, a few people, most of whom were poor women with baskets, were kneeling here and there, anywhere, on the hard tiles of the floor, earnestly fixed in private devotion, themselves, their surroundings, apparently forgotten. They would enter the church by any door, walk a short distance, kneel and pray for a few minutes, and go quietly out, as if they had taken a natural opportunity for an observance in the course of movements that led them near or past the church.

These women seemed spontaneous in their impulse to pray, as if their faith were much of life to them. Simple women; simple people! And religion, to them, is a refuge and a source of strength, in a day when it has become no more than a habit, or a formula observed out of policy, among so many sophisticated people; in a day when it has been finally rejected by many advanced, intellectual people. Wherein the simple are the richer, and the day has become one of spiritual poverty for us others.

> " . . . *All deities reside in the human breast.* . . .
> *God only Acts & Is, in existing beings or Men.* . . .
> *Golden Spain, burst the barriers of old Rome!*"

There are doors out of churches that do not lead away from God.

Outside, we found warmth in the sunlight, the noon-dazzle on brown walls, and we walked heedless of where our steps might take us. Young palms in a little square—so like the palms in Sydney—rib and lattice of strong vegetable growth, burnished for hot Summer. *They* never droop on blazing days. Beaded blooms may freely hang like brilliant rosaries from the base of every springing crown, to tell the years, but the palms of Egypt are unchanged, and the wells of Samaria have not ceased to flow. The church of el Pilar behind us, huge and hollow, reared above Zaragoza domes and pinnacles and towers thrust fairly into the sky. Seen from afar, they float in the delicate mass of the city like a brittle palace blown from fairyland. Beauty enough there is in that alone. And churches enough there are in Zaragoza for us to forget that el Pilar is a church.

Once inside the city the rivers and everything close to their banks are quickly forgotten. Our walk had taken us into busy streets, and the warm light that filled them, the movement of the people, reminded us of the time of day—reminded us of lunch. Where to lunch? Go back to the hotel—it was close by—? No—it would be better to find a restaurant; to sit for an hour among people who belonged to this place.

In a street of lesser importance we found one that was very crowded, and we sat on a bench at a long table, to eat arroz con pollo—chicken and rice—the dish that the persuasive landlord at Saverdun had called roz con pollo, seen here for the first time since then. The meal was good, but when we began to think less of arroz con pollo and more of our surroundings, we discovered—or thought that we discovered—that we were in one of the low dens of the city.

All the villainous, lowering faces, all the shabby, rowdy hoodlums of Zaragoza had undoubtedly arranged to meet in that restaurant, on that day, to report to the leader of a gang. There was the wench of a waitress, taking longer than was necessary to give that fellow his bottle of wine. Talking to him softly. Orders from the chief? Some new assignment of crime? You looked at me as if you expected me to be showing signs of nervousness. "Imagine yourself," you said, "in a crowd several grades tougher than this. What would you do?"—"I'd get out!" At least, I thought it, if I did not say it. I knew I'd get out—very quickly.

But this crowd, observed more closely, seemed less fearful than it looked. After all, nobody was taking any notice of us, that is, nobody but the man opposite, who was burning with curiosity. The talk was rowdy but it was talk within small groups of acquaintances, not general talk. The manners were rough, but they were the rough manners of decent people rather than the bad manners of a degenerate element. A seedy old man was playing wretched music on a concertina outside the door, and more than one person who left the restaurant gave him a few coppers.

We were, it seemed, among Spanish workmen, carters, drivers, porters, and attendants of buildings, and they looked more terrible than they could possibly be. But what a half-company of marauding soldiers might have been recruited from that room! What loud, ferocious yells, to carry bloodless victory, might not burst from such a gang! What enemies in flight before their terrible appearance! And withal, they were not the most dangerous-looking men we were to see in Spain!

But the person opposite could wait no longer. With a gesture he absorbed us into swarthy, unshaven friendship. With another gesture he commanded wine—we must drink with him. No? But of course yes! We must, *must* accord him the honour—a mere half-bottle, and the privilege of conversing with strangers. We accorded him the honour.

He was pleasant, sincere, quite anxious to converse with strangers, and wanted to hear of the world outside Spain. He was still more anxious to know what strangers thought of Spain, and his hospitality was formidable. He was ready to order many bottles of wine, bottles commensurate in number with the amount of honour he could get us to accord him. But we were firm about it, and accepted no more than the half-bottle. Vino tinto—the common, red wine, opaque and nearly black in colour, is strong, and we had already drunk a bottle of it with our meal.

You, backslider! left me to carry on the conversation, and left me, too, to drink the wine of courtesy, all of it, for not a drop would you accept, and the man opposite still had the bottle that was brought with his meal! You were quite interested, said yes or no now and then and smiled amiably most of the time, but insisted that you had had enough wine and would drink no more. I too had had enough, and wanted no more. And you left me almost without help in maintaining our side of a long conversation in Spanish, though you enjoyed listening to it.

I began to feel the effects of too much wine, and you began to notice them. I began, with their help, to be angry, and in spite of my efforts to remain calm, to appear urbane, you noticed that too. I found myself cursing you. "Damn him!" I thought. "Why the hell doesn't he give a bit of help? He wants the entertainment, but he's not willing to share the obligations! Selfish! Confounded ignorance of decent behaviour, too!" Oh, but I felt mean, mean—in the American sense of the word. Ready to say the most cutting and damaging of half-truths.

And the man opposite was really amusing, an intelligent person and a good talker. He reminded me of Tombell, who considered that Spanish wines were poor, too strong; one couldn't drink the necessary two litres of them. This man thought that French wines were poor, too light; one might as well drink water.

He reminded me too of the gendarmes we met near the southern margin of the limestone hills in Lot. They were anxious for us to see more excellence in France than elsewhere, and said of Spain: "Ah! vous y verrez une très grande différence—You'll not find things the same down there." This man made a corresponding implication, and more definitely, for when I spoke of France he told us, rather than asked us: "Pero no creen Ustedes que es más alegre aquí?—Of course, you're finding it much livelier here?" That was it! France, vivacious, temperamental, but Spain, warm, *lively*, a calm, sustained energy of life in things; few ups and downs.

I wish I had been in a good enough temper to have enjoyed the talk of the man opposite. But it lasted for an interminable half-hour; until the wine was finished and he remembered that it was time for him to go back to work.

When he had gone we too left the restaurant, and the day seemed to have crumbled to pieces. We were surly, laconic, and walked without any notion of where we were going, or why. There was nothing we wanted to do; nothing we could have done or seen in such a mood of grating opposition. Our common desire for peace helped us to revive those resolutions against quarrelling that we had made before the journey began. We avoided argument, which only meant that we refrained from talking. We began to pretend that there was nothing wrong, and agreed, very politely, that we were wasting a fine, sunny afternoon that should not be wasted—the only day in our lives that would ever find us in Zaragoza.

What, then, would we do? There was this, that, the other possibility, and to each a "No!" from one of us. What, then? Was there nothing that we could do? At last, somewhere near the big square, I suggested low pleasures, worldly pursuits. Let us, if we could agree upon nothing else, agree at least upon being fools—kill time, cease to regard the city as a museum exhibit, but participate, however crudely, in its life. Surely, there were personable señoritas in Zaragoza who would not so stand upon ceremony as to refuse an invitation to dine with foreign travellers!

That made the rupture as complete as if we had come to blows. After your first faint interest in the suggestion, we could agree about nothing. Resentment burst visibly, because, most of the ideas being mine, they were violently out of harmony with some concealed, vicarious life your mind was leading—some unvoiced preoccupation that had made you wish, all day perhaps, to be anywhere but where you actually were. Disappointment that called you to the source of letters you had not received. Irritation with immediate things—fool banks! "A." getting drunk at lunch!

We agreed somehow, and quickly, that our antagonism had to be released, whatever be the consequences, and we marched resolutely back to the hotel, to fight, if need be, in our room.

In there we broke loose, and let the spring fly from every petty, suppressed impatience we had ever had with each other; said openly and thoroughly, what we thought of each other. Hard, pelting rain came down, and drowned all the noises of the outside world, but we took no notice of it. There was neither victory nor defeat, but there was one final question to answer: "Is this journey to continue?"

Quite calmly, we sat down and discussed the question for an hour. The steady sound of rain must have had some influence over our nerves, for we found ourselves becoming interested in the discussion; found ourselves explaining to each other that we knew nobody else with whom such a journey could have been undertaken; explaining that we had each met the other in Paris with the wish and the will to be able to spend a year, or as much of a year as might be possible, together, in the belief that some fine thing—something as good as this journey—would come of it.

We discovered that this journey was, actually *was* the thing we had anticipated, and agreed that it must not be destroyed by moodiness, unreasonable behaviour, irritability, nor any of the other things that cause people to quarrel. The journey must proceed. Very like girls in a boarding school, perhaps, finding that they had quarrelled about nothing. But such crises, whether they be about "nothing" or about "something" are more than acutely painful at the time. They are grave. And to abandon a journey like this would be no light thing.

Luckily, we were protected from the danger of wanton behaviour by certain habits of respect that follow us into our most angry moments, and we were sane enough to keep values and consequences in mind. Thus was the safety of the journey—and of our friendship—maintained.

We did not notice when it stopped raining, but when peace was made the air was bright and very clear. We went out, more to enjoy each other's company than for any other reason, but soon found ourselves enjoying a very gentle atmospheric quality of the evening.

We passed through some narrow, crooked streets in a poor section of the city, where there was mud and where people stared at us, a few insolently, others with that open, Spanish curiosity that nearly always pleased us. A cultured-looking woman accompanied by an attractive girl passed us in one street and broke the rule by not staring at us. "That's natural—they wouldn't!" said you.

We made our way to a more imposing quarter and admired the façades of palaces of the old nobility. The great church of la Séo, the cathedral of Zaragoza, was locked up, but we tried all its doors before accepting the fact that we could not go inside. The history of Aragon must be written in the growth of that church, for it traces an unbroken ancestry right back to the first mosque that was built in Spain, and every period of architectural inspiration has added beauty to it, until it stands now, with tiled roof, mudéjar walls, renaissance portals, a finely graceful renaissance belfry, a low mudéjar tower, and gothic and romanesque windows, one of the most mixed in style and most rich in variety of all the churches of Zaragoza. Closed. And we would never be returning to Zaragoza.

We went and leaned idly over the railings of the suspension bridge. The evening was cold, with a threat of rain in the air, a luminous fluidity in the light, and much delicacy in the tints of sky and water—salmon pink and clear yellow glistening on the surface of the river upstream, caught, somehow, from a sunset that had left a gentler mauve and lavender behind it, opposed, in the west, to a steel-grey softness in the eastern sky. The splendid bridge on the old piers looked sombrely grand, a thing of the Middle Ages, and the city revealed minor towers that we had not seen before, as if, on so quiet, so melancholy an evening, shy, modest beauty could be shown in confidence. "Perhaps you'd like to see these little things, too," said the city. "This light suits them well, and you're going away to-morrow."

Within the town evening filled the streets with people, a slow colourful crowd that seemed to have just changed its clothes. There were officers in blue cloaks, and, here and there, women wearing mantillas; not the flaunting, floating, diaphanous mantillas of Seville and Córdoba, that hang with such filmy lightness over the high peak of the comb. These were simpler affairs, scarves of black lace, rich and fine in quality, worn becomingly but without any studied effect, and with no high comb beneath them.

Where, I wondered, were all the seductive things that lure tourists to Spain—mantillas, guitars, bailarinas, wonderful costumes, bright colour, and light, amorous life? Doubtless in Andalusia, where the tourists go, but not, so far as we had seen, along the road from Andorra to Madrid! We saw few mantillas, and we heard only one guitar. In Madrid itself we did see a group of women occupying a box at the bull fight, dressed in the fashion that is called Spanish, even to the bright, figured shawls, but they proved to be dancers from a newly opened cabaret.

There was little indeed along our road for persons who seek the obvious beauty and excitement that are the main ends of tourism, but there was much, as there is everywhere, for those who can discern elusive beauty in common things. And the common things of Spain, which are not guitars nor mantillas, are not common elsewhere—one must go to Spain for them.

Paséo in Zaragoza: a diffuse paséo, unlike the crowded pressure in the streets of Lérida, and it held our interest until dinner time.

I was embarrassed at dinner that night. My pack had worn a ragged hole in the back of my woollen sweater, a puncture to my self-confidence. The same noble lady again scrutinised us, this time through a lorgnette. An English gentleman who was dining with his chauffeur and a young friend, kept us under such indignant observation that we called him "the duke"—not of Bedford. Our presence offended him greatly, and he seemed to wish us to understand that he was enduring it only because he *was* a gentleman. We ordered more wine, Rioja clarete fino, a pleasant claret that seemed to dissolve our surroundings away from us, and we began to glow, like lights in an empty darkness. Drunk? Not at all. Only quietly exhilarated, and conversing well.

We went out for coffee, to a large café on the western side of the square. We sat outside at first, but the air was chilly, so we went inside, and found the place empty except for ourselves and an officer who sat with a lady in a corner. A handsome pair, against the crimson lining of his blue cloak. We had dined early, at the hour when English "dukes" and noble ladies feel hungry, which is long before Spaniards dine. The officer and the lady went out, and we, who do not like empty cafés, and like still less to wait perhaps two hours for them to fill up, went soon afterwards, to walk slowly through empty streets.

Paséo was long over and the people had gone home to dinner—the city was at rest. To-morrow we would have to travel a long distance and must set out early. We went back to the hotel, went to bed early, and slept in that relief of peace that follows war.

"The duke's" chauffeur was at breakfast before us in the morning, and we supposed that "the duke" too was leaving Zaragoza that day. We ourselves had no interest in the place, "the duke," nor even in breakfast. We wanted to be out on the road, away. By half-past eight we had paid the Hotel Universo y Cuatro Naciones sixty-nine pesetas and sixty centimos, and were out in the street in homeless liberty.

But, this hotel bill! It reminded me of a hundred and sixty-seven francs, fifty centimes, paid to the Hôtel de la Barbacane at Foix! There was nothing wrong with the bills, for they were reasonable. The wrong lay in us. Your dollars and my letter of credit were, after all, slender and diminishing resources, and we were people to whom francs and pesetas counted, as they say, and in going to hotels frequented by tourists and foreigners we were living beyond our means. We discussed it, and decided, or ordered each other, "Don't do it again!" But we did it again; two hundred and twenty-five francs eighty centimes for a night at a fashionable hotel at Tours, on our way back to Paris! We were dressed in real suits then, but how thoroughly we enjoyed these rare extravagances each time we "allowed" them!

The bill paid, and ourselves free to leave Zaragoza! But not quite. That hope that springs eternal made you want to go to the post office again, and we went there, to receive nothing. But you accept things when you know that they are final. And besides, you had invented a game for yourself to play before leaving Zaragoza, and were in a buoyant state of mind over it.

You had, it seems, been studying provision stores while we were walking about the city yesterday, and had made up a menu of things that you intended to eat by the roadside to-day; very simple things, but they were to be good, of the best quality obtainable in Zaragoza. You knew where the right shops were, and led me from one to another, buying exactly what you wanted.

Foremost came butter, fragrant, "cows' butter" de las montañas de León—from the mountains of Leon, as the wrapper stated. Then came the most palatable cheese that it has been my fortune to eat in any country, a flat, round little cheese called Quesito, with a round edge like a taurus moulding, the yellow-brown rind sweet as the rind of smoked ham. Next, we had to have dates, tacky brown dates from Morocco. With the dates we bought large clean oranges. Bread followed, a springy, fresh loaf with a crust as crisp as crusted snow. Last came wine, a yellow vino claro with a pleasing aroma. Some of your shops were places, where only "the best people" would go. Others were in side streets, little shops that sold the best things—to poor people. And for this admirably selected lunch we paid four pesetas twenty-five centimos.

We were really free to leave Zaragoza now, and we chose a long, mean street that led in the right direction. Dark shops, vegetables in sacks and baskets, urchins, donkeys, and odours that were not of drains. It led us under a railway bridge to an open, dusty boulevard in a modern part of the city, a quarter built to a plan, banal and uninteresting as the new extensions of any city—or as any new city.

Wide avenues led off in several directions and there were no signs to tell us which one to follow. A fat, red-headed, unshaven policeman in a shapeless uniform was unable to tell us which was the main road to Madrid, but a small boy pointed to it without hesitation. "Straight ahead, señores!" We trusted the small boy and thanked the policeman.

The avenue became a slender, parched faubourg that climbed its rectilinear way up a long and exceedingly gentle slope, the shelving bottom of the broad valley of Ebro. Up and away from the river slowly we went, on a line that was to keep our faces looking henceforth towards far Madrid, now two hundred and five diminishing miles away. There was the sign, TO MADRID, the first we had seen!

All at once the faubourg ended. Abruptly the line of houses on either side broke off, as we walked past a pretty, white villa with a few trees around it. Before us was the open country, empty, gently rising, a sweep of dry prairie. We were out of Zaragoza.

Open country. A wilderness without habitations, and a dusty road leading straight across it, to low hills far away. It seemed that the miles ahead would be dull; miles to traverse more quickly than on foot. An automobile overtook us and sped on, but not so fast that we failed to recognise "the duke" sitting back heavily, comfortably, his car wasting no time in these gentle, monotonous miles. He sent us a lazy glance of recognition without interest as he passed by—"Ah! the two shabby fellows from the hotel, tramping. Knapsacks." Then he forgot us, left us to tramp on in his dust. "Where'll he be to-night—in Madrid?"—"Most likely." But what a way to travel, rushing across the country without even stopping to look at it!

"The duke," we thought, would return to England to report that there was little to be seen in Spain outside the cities—a poor, barren country. We became contented with our way of seeing Spain, be the miles empty or entertaining, the country barren or fertile. He would be, or could be, in Madrid this very night, but between us and Madrid there were still nine days of slow travel, nine days of near acquaintance with the earth, and we grudged their passing. Nor were the immediate miles to be so empty of interest as they had first appeared.

Almost as soon as we had broken clear of the city, in the first hour of march, we distinguished a white patch far away to the west, a cloud, half risen between distant highlands and the sky. A cloud? A familiar form—the same place—and still there! We recognised it with an exclamation together: "It *is* snow!" Our cloud-or-snow, snow-or-cloud, of the day before yesterday, first seen just after we had passed through the Puebla de Alfinden. We set the map and studied it with excitement, to discover what lofty mountain it might be that held the snow in May. But I had cut the maps in Paris and the strip was not wide enough, did not extend far enough to include this mountain of late snows. We identified it as being probably a northern peak of the Sierra Nava Alta, and were content to call it "our mountain," a just name, for we owned it all this day and for half the next.

But it was not, properly, a part of the Sierra Nava Alta. It was more distant, loftier than that: the peak of Moncayo, seven thousand feet in height, part of the Sierra de Moncayo, which towers over the westernmost confines of Aragon. Whence we saw it first, near the Puebla de Alfinden, two days ago, it was sixty miles away. It was now forty miles off, coming nearer, nearer, but never to come near. It lifted our eyes continually from the road, revealing itself slowly, like a person advancing into the deepening trust and safety of revelation that lie in friendship. Our mountain—bearing the far snows of Lebanon.

And beside the road, too, there was interest. We noticed, shortly after leaving the faubourg, that the telephone poles to the right were new, so new that they could only recently have been raised into position. Two cross-ties to each pole, with insulating cups on the upper one, but as yet carrying no wire. A new telegraph line, from Zaragoza to—where? Further on there were boxes on the roadside containing electrical goods from somewhere in Indiana. Here and there was a green glass insulating cup lying beside or on the road, in some places a broken one. Further on were poles lying on the ground, and men digging holes at regular intervals in which to place them. And last, a small camp on the bank of a tree-lined canal, unguarded except by a very friendly dog; and beside a tent, a miniature model of a telegraph line, in wood, glass, and wire. This line was evidently a big undertaking, and the work seemed to be in different stages of advancement at different places, for beyond the canal the poles were all up.

We crossed an old stone bridge, a low and heavy bridge, and we sat in its shade on the canal bank, the dog sitting trustfully with us, glad of our company, for his job of guarding empty tents in broad daylight was a lonely one, a job to make a dog impatient.

The canal was full, placid, its banks overgrown with reeds and grass, and the trees that lined it were untrimmed. A canal in disuse. For no barge or boat could have passed along the silted channel; no horse or mule could have trodden the overgrown towpath, in years. It was, however, a good canal, a green, fresh thing to encounter on the dry prairie, curving across the land in smooth, relaxed sinuosity. We wondered much about it.

The map called it the *Canal Imperial de Aragón*, and showed it running along the south-western margin of the shallow bottom of the Ebro valley, far from the river, as much as five miles from the river in places, but roughly parallel to it, from near Ribaforada, forty miles up the Ebro from Zaragoza, to end blindly, as if unfinished, half-way between el Burgo de Ebro and Fuentes de Ebro, opposite Villafranca de Ebro, twelve miles down the valley from Zaragoza.

Fifty-two miles of canal, and this part fallen into disuse! Therefore, it was bearing no continuous traffic. What was it for, this fine waterway? At Zaragoza we had seen a picture in a tourist pamphlet that showed barges and small sailing boats on the shady Canal Imperial, but the reach depicted must have been far from here—or the photograph was taken long ago. Could this canal be a feature in that scheme of which we had heard at Osera, of making the Ebro navigable down to the sea? But between canalisation and navigability there is a difference, and the scheme sounded like an ambitious project. Yet, between canalisation for barges and limited navigability for skiffs there is also a difference. A placid canal beside the turbulent river ought, surely, to be of use to the villages of the green valley floor.

Here, where the road crossed it, the canal marked the boundary of the flat, open country, for beyond it lay dry, sandy hillocks covered with low bushes and clumps of dried-up grass. At the canal we were on the edge of the broad, imperceptibly shelving bottom of the Ebro valley, a bottom that leans towards the river at very low angles in places, and seems to fall towards it in broad, low terraces in other places, as, for instance, where we had crossed it this morning. For, between Zaragoza and the stone bridge we had risen only a hundred and fifty feet in a distance of about four miles. Were the slope even and gradual that would mean a rise of some forty feet in a mile. But the slope was not even. There had been long, level stretches of road with shorter ones of gently climbing road between them where the slope was perceptibly more than forty feet in a mile. It seems to me, therefore, that we crossed and mounted several broad, low steps or terraces of the valley bottom that morning, and that Zaragoza, and the green belt of irrigated land through which the Ebro flows, a belt that occupies say a third or a quarter of the width of the valley bottom, are on the low, inner terraces, while the canal runs along the margin of the outermost and highest one where the lowest hills meet the shallow, flat lands of the bottom.

We said good-bye to the lonely watchdog, who made no attempt to follow us but would have liked to have come too, and we advanced into the desolate sandhills. Desolate they were, but not unbeautiful, and they hid no secrets, as I found when I sought a place of privacy. Everything in those hills could be seen from somewhere, and, if they hid themselves from each other, behind each other, they hid no flank or fold from the distance. They lay piled into low ridges, and the road ran straight and easily across them, across wave and ample, empty trough, towards the scarp of a long tableland five miles away; ran ever rising, more steeply than it had sloped across the broad bottom, rising steadily to the foot of the far wall that was the valley's side. Lonely country, where men pass but do not dwell; where flocks and herds might crop one scattered meal and leave insolvent pasture to the slow redemption of new poverty.

To see men walking along the road in such country makes men seem puny and life a thing that moves from the peril of hungry places away towards safe, in-dwelling places, safe and fruitful places. Men cannot stay where they cannot subsist, and men on foot in such a country must, like ourselves, be passing elsewhere.

There were men ahead of us on the road, walking slowly and carrying long, heavy objects. We overtook them within a mile and found them to be the linesmen who were working on that section of the telegraph line. Rough workmen, about a dozen of them, carrying heavy crowbars, mattocks, shovels, and they were cordial in their exchange of greetings as we passed them by. At our eleven o'clock halt, where the country had become more hilly and the road had begun to wind up steeper grades, they overtook us, and asked if we had stopped for lunch. We said yes, and let them pass on. Our few remaining minutes of rest put only a short distance between them and us, and when we moved on we did so slowly, at their pace, hesitating to repass them and so let them again pass us. "What'll we do," you asked, "pass them, find a proper place, and have lunch at the right time?" But you answered yourself. "No. Let's lunch right here."

Lunch was to be your picnic, I was already hungry, and one place looked as good as any other for a picnic-ground where all the land was shadeless and the bright, still morning spread a comfortable warmth too kind for shade or shelter to be needful. Here, then.

But we found shelter, not from the sleeping wind and resting dust, nor from the heat of a mild sun, but from view. And why from view, in such a place? At most, an automobile or two might pass, did pass, during the luncheon hour, but otherwise we were alone in the open. This lunch, however, was to be an intimate meal, something for ourselves, not to be made insignificant by spacious, empty distances, nor to be eaten to the *memento mori* of the melancholy sweep of our surroundings. We would exclude from it everything but the delight of being alive, and most successfully we did so, by spreading our provisions on the grassy floor of an old gravel pit where there were dandelions; and by eating them with our backs propped against a firm, steep face of clean, sandy clay.

There may be luck in finding a small gravel pit near a lonely road in open country, when one does not want to share the common food of men and the fellowship of understanding in a public, if empty world; but I prefer to believe that such circumstances are combined, arranged, by something which is not chance, but is nevertheless outside ourselves. The lunch in the gravel pit marks, I believe, the most intimate, the most delightful, and the most personal hour of our whole journey. It was proof, again, that great joy belongs to simple things. Our lunch was simple, as far from luxury as it was from poverty: ourselves were simple, as far from philosophy as we were from the commonplace: and our surroundings were simple, as far from grandeur as they were from dullness. Out of it all came peace, contentment, quiet sensitiveness, and the understanding of it all, which is joy.

Of that occasion there is much to remember, but little, almost nothing, to record. Fresh bread and butter, the delicate stimulus of the flavour of cheese, the sufficient richness of the meat of dates, the sharp sweetness of oranges, the tart coolness of wine—these were the incidents. Lips and teeth and tongue and palate keen to texture and flavour with the keenness of health, asking no spice, craving no added richness, but able to detect the full, faint excellence of common food; able to sense the gentle, civilised perfection of staple things. How whole, the goodness of bread—of *this* bread, light in odour as the smell of pear blossom! How familiar, the smooth newness of daily butter, won from the centuries of European pasturage, a habit to the heedless tongue until, deprived and sharpened to simplicity, the tongue make new discovery of communicable fineness, light flavour of delight! Butter and bread and cheese, oranges and dates and wine, and hands that have pressed the flat, cold rosettes of dandelions, distil subtle odours. And appetite—when the senses are so alive that the pleasure of food comes as much through the eyes and nostrils, as much through the handling of it with fingers that really feel, as through the mere eating of it—can be, as it was then, a stimulus to incorporate and suffuse throughout the body the very temper of the day itself. It is—was—much more than the satisfaction of a need, the gratification of a desire. We were two very healthy persons then, and hungry after a morning's exertion, but our appetite was not merely one to consume pleasing food. There was an urge in us to nourish ourselves upon all the influences about us; to bring the near world, because it was a good world, into us through all our senses, which are "the chief inlets of the soul in this age." To do so was to know throughout our being that it was a delightful thing to be alive in such a world.

Rest after exertion, rest after food, and the day's clear quiet, brought so complete a relaxation, so total a relief of strain to body and mind that I found myself in what seemed to be the contradictory state of alertness, finely responsive and resonant, as if by reflex rather than by will, and attentive as a sleeping bird, in my repose, to every tiny happening; ready as a hanging leaf or a calm sheet of water to gather impress from the faintest drift of air. Neither active nor inert, it was like being an instrument that registered a transmission of joy from all things. You, it seemed, were in a like state, and some power existed that enabled us to communicate, perhaps to share this fine sentience. There was, I believe, no emotion in the experience at all, but we seemed to understand each other better during that hour than ever before. Doubtless there was, in this, a reaction from the violent disharmony of the quarrel of yesterday afternoon—or the quarrel had filtered, or strained off, all the turbidity that had accumulated in the relationship and we were able to see each other without distortion. Not that I would rationalise the account of these moods, but the understanding, to-day, was very full, very close, and it was a childishly simple one of joyful satisfaction. Unsentimental, unaffected, we knew that we were both satisfied with everything that had brought us there—food, the aspect of the country, the day, the time of day, the companionship, the situation, its place in the journey, the journey itself. I don't remember what we talked about, for we said so little, and even that little was casual, unimportant. We did nothing, or next to nothing but sit, feeling the sandy clay at our backs, the grass under us. Intensely green, that grass, green and fresh as the wheat in dusty Catalonia. You, I remember, found that bees had made their hives in the soil and in the gravel bank, burrowing bees, that had learnt how to live in a treeless country. Somewhere back along the road you had found similar nests or hives of bees in hard clay. It was near the lonely vineyard where we rested to relieve your ankle between Lérida and Fraga, if I remember correctly. Bees are good companions, they are so industriously drowsy, so restfully active, and they understand the importance of tiny detail and the leisure that must be brought to all thoroughness. Best of all, they understand the meaning of enough—that there never can be enough of any healthy thing. I could have stayed contentedly in the gravel pit all day, and so could you, but there were uninhabited miles and miles to be crossed before night—nearly as many as there were between Montauban and Toulouse.

We made the gravel pit look as if no vagabonds had eaten a lunch there, squared our packs, and resumed a striding march towards the scarp. The road continually climbed, gradually ascending, its line curving more and more from side to side.

We chose a favourable place to look back on Zaragoza, and saw the whole land leaning towards the river—a hidden river now—and the city, far off, no dream city, but a prosaic, low spread of brown buildings and chimneys, a place of work and industry in murky haze. It showed an extension southward that had not been visible before, the faubourg of the Huerva valley, and the Huerva, a lesser river, that flows from the south to join the Ebro almost exactly opposite the place where the Gállego comes down from the north, stepped out of the map to take meaning in our minds, became a reality of water, a flowing stream, another avenue of life that leads to Zaragoza.

The understanding that comes from a map is at once fuller, more complete, and less eloquent than the actuality of the country before one's eyes. The map, compressing the plan of the country into a little space, gave us an understanding of the existence of Zaragoza, an existence made possible by the curious distribution of rivers that join the Ebro near the city, the Gállego, the Huerva, and the Jalón. The place is a crossroads and a natural stronghold, protected on all sides except the west by formidable rivers. This we could see from the map. And on the west it is protected by barren lands, which we had to traverse in order to understand them. We had seen the Ebro, knew its power and its bounty, and we had seen the Gállego. To-day the Huerva, though unseen, had become real to us, but the Jalón still remained a blue trace on the map. The Huerva and the Gállego lie almost exactly along the same line (which possibly marks a line of fracture in the earth's crust), a bow, gently bent, with the Ebro drawn like an arrow squarely across it and shooting to the south-east.

But it is not this line of the bow and line of the arrow that make a crossroads of Zaragoza, for the little Huerva, rising under the hills of high Aragon, brings no more than a local traffic down. It is along the grander Jalón that life and ideas and merchandise flow, between the high platform of central Spain and Zaragoza, by road and telegraph and rail, to meet or leave the Ebro at a confluence which is fifteen miles above the city.

Between Biscay and the Mediterranean the great road is along the Ebro and through Zaragoza. Between high Spain and Pyreneean Spain and further, Gascon France, which is to say, between Africa and Western Europe, there is a road along the Jalón, across the Ebro at Zaragoza, and along the Gállego. For a little way, for fifteen miles, between the city and the confluence of the Jalón, the latter road fuses with the former, along the middle stroke of the Z of Jalón-Ebro-Gállego. But the crossing is at Zaragoza.

By this latter way, one feels, came Hannibal from Carthage towards Rome; and this way came the Roman legions from Gaul into Iberia. This way, perhaps, came Don Quixote, from la Mancha to Barcelona, avoiding Zaragoza on account of pique—but how? And this way comes the modern train from Madrid to Barcelona, because there is no easier way. Only the modern highroad and the line of telegraph run for a short distance more directly, across the barren, broken country west of the city, until they too—with the automobile and the pedestrian—are forced into the narrow corridor of the Jalón.

Chances of nature put this place of crossing, the city of Zaragoza, in the middle of a region that has a force of character of its own, the dry, stony country that became Aragon, an inland state.. And whether the strong position of the city made Aragon, or Aragon raised the strong place up to leadership among the cities of northern inland Spain, I will not guess. But it has the tenacious vitality of a thorny, desert plant; has existed for ages, and remains the vigorous and beautiful mistress of the lands of the Ebro.

It had been so easy, with our maps, and our ignorance, to see parallels, to draw conclusions, and to make what were not comparisons. Gascony, so green and fertile, and the valley of the Garonne, with Toulouse, Montauban, and Bordeaux. Mid-northern Spain, and the valley of the Ebro (before we had seen it), with Zaragoza, Lérida, and Barcelona! Surely, there was a correspondence in all these things, for

. . . . they lie like wedges,
Thick end to thin end and thin end to thick end,

these two great troughs between the Pyrenees and the massed highlands to north and south.

But there is no true correspondence at all. For Gascony is one continuous country, all the lands of the Garonne, and Toulouse, Montauban, and Bordeaux are members of a team. In Mid-northern Spain there are several countries, dissimilar, perhaps never to be properly united; Navarre, Aragon, inland and coastal Catalonia (which are possibly two different countries). Their capitals, Pamplona, Zaragoza, Lérida, and Barcelona, differ like the minds of proud and vigorous persons whose life is their own.

Toulouse is nourished by the labour of Gascon trade, a store-house, but Zaragoza is filled with the soul and the riches of Aragon, and was a stronghold as well as a store-house. There the Aragonese have honoured their genius and fostered their own culture, and the city's wealth is in a hoarded heritage of beauty more than in the investments of prosperity. Pictures and frescoes by Goya in the museums and churches, and other things, which, through our ignorance, we did not see; tapestries of the Middle Ages, executed, some of them, from Giotto's cartoons; precious objects of great worth in the sacristies. These, and buildings that are a native growth, make the small city one of importance for the cultured world, and make it, I believe, richer than its large and wealthier neighbour, Toulouse.

It is quite a small city, indeed, a little city, Zaragoza, corresponding in extent and in power of communication almost exactly with Montauban, for eleven main roads and six lines of railway radiate from it, yet Montauban, beside it, is no more than a provincial town. For the importance of things is not to be measured by their size, and Zaragoza is, not only to Aragon but to further lowlands of the Ebro and to mountain regions on their flanks, what Toulouse is to the basin of the Garonne. It is a small city only because it serves the diffuse and widely scattered people of a meagrely endowed part of the earth. Men do not swarm in the dry lands of the Ebro as they do in the green, easy basin of the Garonne, but Zaragoza, remote as it is, attracts people from the outside world—understands English—and, small as it is, presides over a territory as wide as, perhaps wider than, that of Toulouse itself.

A strong place according to ancient ideas, nipped narrowly between the Ebro and the Huerva, two arms of a cross of confluent waters, and strong it may well be according to modern ideas through its very remoteness, and through the poverty of its walled-in cradle of genesis. Who would descend upon such a country to lay waste what is already waste? And who, were it a rich country, would court extermination in the defiles of Navarre, of the Castilian meseta, of the rough hills that divide Catalonia into two countries, or, least of all, of the Pyrenees themselves? None, for the mere possession of Aragon. It is true that the Romans, the Visigoths, and the Moors did so, but they did so in the process of consolidating their power in Iberia, rather than for the mere possession of Aragon. No. Zaragoza, to one who has traversed the land on foot, feels remote and safe, capable of maintaining the strong individuality of Aragon within a truly federated Spain.

How beautifully the little city has emerged from the wilderness! Green lands up and down the Ebro, up the Gállego, up the Huerva, a green cross, made and kept green by the laborious control of waters; and all around, the dry prairies, the thirsty hills, the bare, stony wastes! What a sight to see from an aeroplane, and to know that Zaragoza has gathered beauty and riches from time, and drawn them all, as it were, into a safe, small place between the rivers! The city seems to have done everything that such a place could do to concentrate beauty within itself—except for one omission. It looks over its edges at the rivers, but from nowhere within can they be seen. Not an avenue, not a street that aims its line at some far reach of river, so to bring the feeling, the nearness, the glitter of water into the city's daily life. Enclosed. Zaragoza is enclosed.

And if it were not, if it looked outward into the public world, if it admitted the outside gaze directly into its rich, cloistered core, it would be a contradiction to the harmony of Spain. "Lost opportunity of town planning. . . . Backward people. . . . Not alive to modern ideas." Bah! Let Zaragoza remain as it is, true to the spirit of its own people, for here is a city fair enough that it need court no grace from the exploitation of natural "prospects" in the obvious, modern, striking, and tiresome way. Here is a place content to be subtle, and careless of those who, having no eyes, pass and see nothing. A city that is itself the finest grace of its surroundings.

It had sunk now, into the shallow trough behind us that was deepening like the bottom of an empty sea, and we climbed, climbed, slowly up and away from the green-brown city that had been the place-to-which-we-were-going for so many of the preceding days—ever since we left Séo de Urgél, in fact. We were going to Madrid now, and felt that we were going to Madrid. In spite of towns that lay between, famous towns, Guadalajára, and Alcalá de Henares, there seemed to be nothing now between us and Madrid. Before, there had been Zaragoza, the Pyrenees, rolling leagues of France, and time. Time that was full from day to day, full of tomorrows that made Madrid seem far over the horizon of contemplation. And now we were going there.

A wave of time and monotony seems to have carried us forward and swept us up that long, shelving bottom, to deposit us at the foot of hills that fell from the edge of a higher, level land above us, and rose, emerged, as from the dry shore of a sea that had drained away behind us. My memory has played with the time of that day, and contracts an interval here, expands one there, making it seem that we were at the foot of the hills almost at once after lunch. Actually, we walked for an hour to reach them, an hour in which they reared a wall between us and all farther things—our mountain—with their excluding nearness; an hour in which we grew to know them. Capes, and bays, and a small river-mouth which drained no water into an empty ocean.

The road clung like a tendril to the flanks of a jutting promontory, to mount in a low tier of looping curves, and fold and disappear over the edge at the top. A smooth road, curving purely, its outer edge punctuated by neat stone blocks throughout the climb. We watched an automobile sweep around past us to the left into a hidden elbow of the twisting ascent. It was minutes before it appeared again, higher up, and rounding an outer bend. Not that way, we thought, not that way. There must be a shorter, steeper way than that. The telegraph line on our right ran straight into the river-mouth and up a grassy slope that was almost a cliff. Not that way either, we thought, though we could see the linesmen trudging up the steep, a slow, laborious party taking the shortest possible way. We followed the road around a bend and found an old, worn mule-track that led across the ascending loops of road, up and over the swell of the promontory to the top, to a place near the edge, where the map showed a bundle of blue rays opening like a fan to the north—"a good point of view."

Lifted to a thousand feet, and out of breath from the climb, we stopped there for a moment's rest; stopped, and turned for our last intimate view across the spreading concavity of the lowland. Zaragoza was dingy and undistinguished, seen from here, and held nothing to rivet the gaze, and beyond it the Sierra de Alcubierre was no more than a low crest of ricochet whence vision bounded into hazy space immeasurably far and groped for tangibility. Out of the murky remoteness of the north and north-east there emerged, like isles of rock through mists upon the sea, the tops of indiscernible ridges, faint peaks of darker cloud on cloud, the foothills and buttresses of our lost Pyrenees.

Nearer, definitely bright, the north-west bottom held a green floor. Villages upon villages in friendly line, clumped into dull masses that distilled the lazy smoke of men. The populous, green strip, five, eight miles wide, where Ebro bears across the wastes the flood of a precious, northern rainfall from Navarre, and Old Castile, and almost "from the mountains of León."

(*d*) *The Wall of High Spain*

This habit of looking back, one of the first things that Spain taught us—a habit, really, of renunciation, a letting-go with the senses, which, however reluctantly, gave up to the past and to memory everything of a period that led us to such a moment—allowed us to turn and enter the next phase of the journey with a fullness of expectancy that was never disappointed.

And here, where we turned away from Ebro, drawn, as it were, by the first faint obedience to the gravitational pull of Madrid, what new worlds we exchanged for the old! Face about, and we were in a new country, close under the sky, and the land was fruitful. The plateau sloped upward before us with a mild flat curvature to a receding skyline, and the road passed through fields of wheat. It seemed as if the refreshing clarity of elevation had alone been enough to bring down dew and sweetness upon the earth. But the wheat grew out of dry soil that gave a mystery to appearances. Yet, the further we went the more productive the land became, and soon there were treetops peeping above the skyline. Olive groves, that seemed to ride over the receding crest and slide down the long slope to meet us as we moved upward. They surrounded us, healthy, mature trees, neatly pruned and openly spaced. The tilted, rolling soil between them and seen in further expanses through them, had the aspect of a garden, dry, and recently prepared for planting. The ground was newly turned, dug rather than ploughed, and the tidy spread of soil had that cleaned-up appearance that belongs to intensive agriculture. There were not many trees to the acre. Their health, and the general neatness of things, gave us an impression of greater fertility than existed, but these open, silent groves, deserted in the bright noonday, felt close to the life and labour of people who understood how to make the earth yield its utmost to their weight of toil.

Here and there among the trees were low turrets of stone, one to every two or three score of trees. Round, seven or eight feet in diameter, and domed like observatories, perhaps ten or twelve feet high, lower than the trees themselves, in fact, and built neatly of buff stone that resembled the soil in colour. They were not very conspicuous, and they stood, where possible, in low places, depressions. Each one covered a well, as we found on examining one or two that were near the road. The whole extent of the olive grove, which, as we came to know, spread over the flat whale-back of the middle of the plateau, was riddled with hooded wells from which the trees must have been laboriously watered by hand. It was no question of irrigation channels here, but one of ropes and buckets, and of the carrying to and fro of precious water shaded from the sun. Sundown, I imagined, would be a daily hour of work here, when men and women from some far village would spread throughout the grove to carry water to the trees, each one from his own particular well. It reminded me of that bi-weekly labour of nocturnal irrigation called "cultivating" in the orange groves of Southern California, where the method is so much easier (because nature permits an easier method there) and the means are so much more elaborate, but where the personal attention to each tree is no less assiduous. Here, where the water came not from distant and perennial mountain torrents but from the seepage deep in the ground, it was a thing to guard, and the wooden door of each well we examined was bolted.

In the middle of each door was an aperture in the form of a diamond or a crescent, simple adornment, like the crescents and quatrefoils that show the light behind plainly shuttered windows in northern France. A hand put through the hole could feel the coolness of the water, communicate with the water, far down in cavernous darkness. To have one's hand inside a cold, hooded well while the rest of one's body remains in the open heat of a bright noonday, is to feel at once the life of co-existent but dissimilar worlds. It is a piercing of the world of appearance and form, through to the existence of the interior of things; to understand grain and pebble far inside the rock; sap and cell within the mass of trunk and bough. It is a reaching through the unfathomable day's transparency to touch and feel the day's interior of being, its inside darkness of cool, peaceful circulation, expansion, contraction; its unhurried negation of all permanence, in secular change and growth and secular decay. To stand thus, in two worlds, is to enter the concealment that shrouds all processes, and to touch, however blindly, that life that is in all things—quick, and so-called dead—that life that is in one's-self, which lengthens the hair and finger nails, and is different from the consciousness of the life we feel, indifferent to it, so heedless of it that it grows hair for men and dogs alike—unconscious, universal life, resident in rocks and running water as well as in "living things." A life that moves to the rhythm of time, the heat and cold of days and nights, the seasons, the years, and the cycles of years, and sweeps through everything like water through the deep ground here.

The water of the deeper ground was, indeed, the life of this high, flattish place, this gently rounded whaleback of a tableland, of its olive groves and wheat, and of its unseen, withdrawn villagers. A high, flat stump of land rising up out of dry country and girt by steep sides that fell away from its sharp edges, it resembled that broad shelf of wheatland of the Llanos de Curdiél and the Llano de las Menorcas that we traversed after leaving Fraga. The tableland was made of hard and soft layers of rock and clay, piled alternately one on top of the other, and showing vaguely as bands around the steep hills of its sides. Possibly the layers have a very gentle tilt to the north-east—for every surface of low Aragon is tilted—and the south-western edge of the tableland may be a littl higher than the opposite, north-eastern one. But the rolling and gently rounded surface of the top is made of arable, sandy clay, which retains, in its deeper levels, enough soakage from the meagre rains to supply the wells, the olive groves, and allows enough to percolate towards the north-eastern edge, where the surface is lower and the top-clay perhaps thinner, to make possible the cultivation of wheat. In other words, the deep-seated moisture of the hump spreads downward and outward and reaches the surface of the shallower soil, the wheatland, near the edges of the tableland, where it evaporates. The harder layers of rock under the top-clay prevent the water from soaking far down into the mass of the plateau. If it did so, it would emerge from springs low down around the hills of the sides.

It took us two hours to go from the edge of the little tableland to the top of the hump, two hours that turned noonday into afternoon, and two hours which my mind has contracted into a brief stroll half-way through wheatfields, half-way through olive groves. We saw nobody. Only during the last ten minutes of that interval, while climbing a straight length of road that ran between fair trees to a small village on the crest of the hump, did we see people, the party of linesmen, who were just entering the village. They had come straight across country but had made very little better time than ourselves, laden, as they were, with heavy implements.

The village, la Muela, was the only seat of habitation we were to pass through that day. It was very small, a place of no more than two or three hundred people—all the people that the broad back of the tableland (which they call the Meseta de la Muela) will support. We decided that the place looked French, though for what reason I do not know, unless it was due to that feeling of deserted tranquillity which belongs to so many French villages. Nobody was about in shady la Muela, and the little town seemed to be enjoying a trustful, unguarded slumber.

If maps give any hint of the quality of places we should have entered this village with caution, for a part of the plateau is named the Puig de Ladrones—Robbers' Hill—and a neck through which the road passes a few miles beyond the village is called the Col de Ladrones—Robbers' Pass. Clearly, the inhabitants of the plateau, all of whom live in la Muela, once had a rather doubtful reputation. But the innocent slumber of the town allayed our suspicions, and besides, it was nearly two o'clock and we wanted coffee. Where else to get it, if not here?

Two houses upheld between them a room that ran high across the street like a bridge, so that the street passed under a kind of triumphal arch. Perhaps, in earlier times, a wickeder la Muela used to have gates, of which this was the last remaining sign. It seemed to be the only sight for tourists the place contained, and we paid it the attention that was due. While admiring it we noticed a boy who seemed to be trying to pass from one house to another without being seen, and we caught him, or, rather, we delayed him, and asked him where we could find a café. He told us to enter the house on the left, go upstairs, and we would find the café—it was in the "bridge-room."

Now, this was very fortunate. When you see such a room you want to go inside it, and if at the same time you want coffee you want me to arrange for that particular room to be the café, which is sometimes difficult, both ways. But here it was, already arranged for us! Truly, a memorable day.

And the boy was far too polite to have been of the spawn of robbers. To our thanks he said "No hay de qué," and smiled most pleasantly. Now, this expression, *No hay de qué*, which means "Don't mention it," and all similar polite formulas, is one that we had both learnt well and carefully in Spanish classes, because we were told that it is in constant use in colloquial Spanish. But we had to walk from the frontier all the way to la Muela, a distance of a hundred and ninety miles, before we heard it for the first time. It is not used nearly as much in Spain as its equivalent, *Il n'y a pas de quoi*, is used in France.

And there were other expressions and words we had learnt, only to find that the ordinary people say something else. They don't say *fósforos* for matches; they say *cerillas*, because the matches of Spain are wax matches that are sold in pretty, shiny little cardboard boxes with lids that stay open for you, or flap shut and are kept shut by means of a clever elastic device inside them. And when ordinary people want to say that they understand you they are more likely to use the verb *entender* than the one we had been taught, *comprender*. But let me take you up into that "bridge-room" for coffee.

The dark, narrow stairs led us into a dark, narrow kitchen, where two sibylline women were making coffee over a fire on a stone hearth flush with the floor. They asked us to pass through into the next room, the café, which was on a slightly higher level than the kitchen. The door at the head of the short flight of stone steps was so low that I struck my head on the lintel, and entered the café—the "bridge-room"—muttering dark things which the sibylline evidently understood. The six or seven men who were conversing in the room took no notice of us after the exchange of greetings, and we sat on a hard bench to drink coffee in as complete a privacy as if we had been alone. It was good coffee, at twopence a glass, and we ordered more of it after the first glass, not on account of the coffee, but as a pretext for staying a little longer in the "bridge-room." In its atmosphere there was a warm, still vitality, like that of the air under raised cucumber frames in early Spring, as if the sunlight coming through the west windows drew nourishment into the room from the dark kitchen, and the room itself grew a seedling buzz of lively conversation. We, on the shady east side, had not yet come up, so to speak, but the tingle of warm life was in us. Two o'clock in the afternoon, suspended over a village street in Spain. How remote from all our native surroundings—but how thoroughly we were immersed in this journey!

When changing a peseta to pay for the coffee we heard the local word for pennies, the copper pieces of ten centimos, which are the same size as English pennies. Trying to remember the word, I struck my head on the lintel again as we went out, and, so reminded of the lintel, forgot the word. There is less excuse for you. You did not bump your head, but you quickly forgot the word.

We were out of la Muela, and once again among olive trees, a very few minutes after leaving the house of the "bridge-room." Out, away, and no longer climbing but descending. La Muela, the one village of the plateau, situated on the highest point of the whaleback, nearly eighteen hundred feet above sea level. It was about five miles in a straight line (the way the linesmen came—and what had become of the linesmen, in that drowsy village?) from the edge over which we had climbed, to la Muela, up a slope that rose by about a hundred and fifty feet in a mile. I have called the plateau, the Meseta de la Muela, a *stump* of land—quite innocently

—and the name la Muela possibly means something like that, for muela means molar, and hence, perhaps, a stumpy elevation.

We were talking of place-names as we left the village, and they led us to comment on how well the Spaniards know and understand their country. Every little region, like this plateau, and every little corner has a descriptive or an interpretative name. They are good physiographers, the Spaniards, just as the Americans are good geologists: on account of the character of their country; and the Spaniards have given to physiography many of the terms that are in English use: cuesta, sierra, mesa, cañon, ria, caldera, etc. The English term to describe such a land-form as this plateau is "mesa"; it was a typical mesa or tabletop, and its own inhabitants call it a meseta.

La Muela is only fifteen miles from Zaragoza and only a little over six miles from the nearest railway siding in the Huerva valley on the south-east. But its only connection with the outside world is by road and mule-track. It is far from being truly isolated, especially for Spain—six miles from the railway is close to the railway in any country—but no train will ever go to la Muela, nor to the thousands of other places like it in Spain.

I have read that the civilisation of a country is somehow reflected in the density, the closeness, of its network of railways, and if this be so, Spain, with its very open network, is not very "civilised." True, the meaning of civilisation was not made clear, nor was culture allowed an important place in it. But the conclusion, it seems to me, though strikingly expressed on the map, is only *apparently* valid, because railways have less to do with the area of an *old* country than they have to do with the number of people in the area and with what they produce. Spain is, relatively, a poor country, and it supports only half as many people as France which is a rich country. Spain, moreover, is a very rough country and France is almost a gentle one. They are nearly the same size, but, to suggest that France, with its many railways and roads, is more civilised than Spain with its few, is to suggest a bold and questionable thing. Railways and highroads are costly to build in rough country; they go where they *can* go, which is not everywhere: and if the rough country be also a barren or a poor one there will be fewer people in it to pay for them than in a productive country of the same size. The hardest work brings only a meagre return from the soil in many parts of Spain, while less work brings a much bigger one in most parts of France where there is consequently more produce for railways to move—more traffic. The Spaniards, in the parts of Spain we saw, have brought as much of their country under cultivation as can be brought, and have done so very well, and they have built such needful railways and highroads as they can afford. They have developed their own economical way of using their peculiar country and of living in it, which is to say, they have developed a civilisation of their own that is adapted to their needs. Whether it be more or less advanced than the civilisation of France is a question that cannot be fairly answered by comparing maps of the railways of the two countries. Life in France and life in Spain are different and who is to say which is the better? Some will prefer Spain, others France, but they will find little to choose between the Paris-Marseilles express and the Madrid-Barcelona express, between trains in France and Spain, unless it be that the third class coaches of Spain are the cleaner! No. The civilisation of old countries cannot be compared by comparing their railways. And as for that of *new* countries, mere development is not civilisation, and the extensive building of railways for the rapid development of new countries is an activity not quite the same, financially, as the provision of old countries with enough railway to carry their routine traffic.

No railways will ever be built to the thousands of la Muelas of Spain, up over the sharp edges of high mesas, to serve a few hundred people who most likely eat nearly all the wheat they grow and have only their olive crop to sell. Their oil will continue to go down to the Huerva on mule-back, which will not matter to the chef in London who wants it for mayonnaise, because the system will maintain the supply.

Many such places will come to be served by motor transport, but many will remain for years in the same condition of to-day. And they will continue to breed, now and then, a man who will enrich the civilisation of Spain just as surely as if they were on the railway; and better, perhaps; because he may grow for long years in his native soil instead of uprooting himself by taking the train to Madrid at sixteen—but that is another system of philosophy.

He might choose, of course, to go to Madrid on foot, the way we ourselves were going, this great man potential to la Muela, and it would doubtless be good for his soul, but if he take this road of ours he will feel the tug of home throughout his first day's journey and had better remember Lot's wife. The little village on the hill remains in sight, and the far mountains of high Aragon gaze at it across many empty, western miles.

Coming down through the olive groves on the west of la Muela we broke into an arc of space that swept, subtended outward, from our snowy mountain. Moncayo had emerged from its three hours of eclipse behind the mass of the plateau, changed now in form, no longer vague, but a long, geological mountain with a top like a table gently tilted to the west, and cut off at the western end by a sheer cliff. The long, sloping top almost imperceptibly concave in line, seemed to be the most inaccessible place in Spain, an Olympus forsaken by the Gods; bier of white Helen, raised and waiting in the serene silence of the upper air.

Under the eyes of snowy Moncayo we descended the slope from the village to the south-western edge of the plateau in about an hour, and the olive groves were quickly left behind, for on this side of la Muela the aspect of the country changed rapidly. It became drier, stonier, and cultivation gave way to pasture. Here and there a few sheep were browsing on the dry, wiry grasses. Nomads, that animated the melancholy, open upland with a fellowship closer than that of the silent, inanimate groves behind us.

Animation, mobility; it is this, the approach or the flight of living things in our presence—indeed, it is their mere movement—that stirs our response to the life outside ourselves and brings the response from that life into ourselves, making us aware of the kinship of the diversity of creatures, and peopling what else were solitude. Perhaps you may tell me that I have tried to say a very simple thing: that men and sheep notice each other in the open and learn thereby that they are not the only kind of creature in the world. Quite so. And they arouse feelings in each other that quicken animation so much that the presence, even in flight, of animals in waste places binds us more closely to life than the awful, serried silence of trees. I have read, and I know, that the heart of a forest is the loneliest of all places. Animate things mean danger or safety to each other and stir something in each other, in us, that is deeper than the senses. They stir the being. Inanimate things appeal with strong beauty to the senses, but, in spite of the life they contain, they are indifferent to us. They do not stir the being. But, more urgently than any intelligence of animate life, they can arouse the soul, arouse it to the desolation of its naked solitude. And so, the snort of a frightened animal can be a greeting, even as the cautious, curious gaze of a few sheep near the edge of the plateau was a greeting.

A stony edge, this one of the south-west, and the approach to it promised a gulf or shallow space below. The road was leading us to another "good point of view," on the sandstone brink, and, as we came nearer to it, the truncated foreground shrinking between us and the edge as in the approach to the brink of a cliff high above the sea, there opened before us a smooth, sweeping concavity of bare land, ten, twelve miles across.

Magnificently, beyond it, like a wall at the world's edge, rose the dark, level sierras of high Spain, the lofty plateau of this land's proud heart; and, borne like some high majesty, Moncayo rested on the edge of the platform of high Spain, a bastion to upland nations, corner-stone of old Castile, remotely towering in the west and far away to the right.

Before us, in the south-west, were the Sierra Nava Alta and the Sierra de Algairén, to the right and left, sundered by a black chasm that looked, in the light of afternoon, like the entrance to forbidden regions. A gulf that threatened with all dream-peril and stark terror, beckoning the frightened spirit with the call of danger, urging, commanding, drawing the will to thread a doomed voyage between the rocks to find the whirlpool that is folly. This was the mouth that spilled the Jalón on to the sagging lands of low Aragon; the opening of the gorge sawn deepest into the edge of high Spain. The way. Down from the high plateau the trains thunder a swerving course through tunnels in the rock, this way. Down from the high rigours of upland climate the river plunges, madly thrust from side to side or slipping in quiet, sinuous treachery down through lunar ravines to a barren, open world, this way—the Jalón. And this, we thought, must be our pass of to-morrow, the gate of a narrow, painful, upward passage into highland Aragon and far Castile.

From the gorge's mouth, and past the right-hand end of our little tableland, the Jalón, invisible, ran an easy course to Ebro, in a gentle fold across the broader fold that lay between us and the sierra. Green dullband of the river, and villages low down—Calatorao, Lucena, Salillas, and Epila—vaguely betrayed a presence of water, life, men, and fixed abode. A line of life across the hollow palm of this land, where all else was void of all but form and colour. Yellow land, brown land, red land out afar, sweeping up to the rock and fall of our cliff and hill below us. And in these nearest underhills a proximate variety of hue, the banded puce and buff and cream of rocks exposed. Fraga, and the striped brilliance of its rocks—Fraga, brightly faded, magnified, and blurred!

We turned from the "good point of view" to follow the long curves of the road down the Robbers' Pass, but were hailed, in this land forsaken of men, by a voice. An old caminero, whom we had not seen, had been watching us from the ledge where he was working. He pointed out a steep track down a gaping little ravine, a shorter way to the bottom than the road. We thanked him, and followed the rough track, which was precipitous and stony at first, but led us quickly to gentler ground under the cliffs. This little plateau, so hard to reach, so easy to traverse, lifted itself behind us as we went down the track, and seemed to be doing so of its own accord, as if it had thrust us impatiently over its edge to discourage us even from thinking about it, by making itself again hard to reach, in case we should want to go back there.

The sudden descent or "drop," as people call it, from plateau to plain communicates a strong feeling of change. A swooping bird, or a person following a similar downward curve in an aeroplane, must feel the descent as a diminuendo of sudden exhilaration, a distinct experience, and the "drop" from plateau to plain on foot is exactly the same kind of experience, but so protracted that the systole of excitement is felt more in the contemplation of the thing when done than its actual doing. I think of that quick descent from the meseta as a drop down, followed by a flat slither out on to the plain.

It should not feel so, because we interrupted the descent, among the hills near the bottom, while you sought ritualistic ease in what you called "a miniature painted-cañon" close to the road. I profited by the delay to watch a shiny automobile come scooting down from the pass and go spinning out over the plain as if it wanted only to get away from the unconcealment of lustreless, wide-open country. Anything so new as a shiny automobile looked as fitting there as a lady in evening dress alone on a raft on the open sea.

I made some geological observations, too, of a useless but entertaining kind. The rock of the hillside was nearly bare, a soft, sandy clay, predominantly red, and deeply furrowed and trenched by sudden rains. It showed a fine banding of colour in the fresher walls of the trenches, ochreous reds and yellows, buff and cream and chalky green. There were thin layers of white, granular gypsum in it in places, and many fissures and joints were filled with brown crusts of limonite. These are pretty details to examine, and it would be possible to write an impressive sermon on desiccation, taking them as a text; or to develop an essay in philosophical speculation, taking them as a theme, but of useful information there is none that they contain. They existed only to keep me amused until you came out from your modest retirement.

Somewhere, I thought, in this arid land of arid origin, there may be workable deposits of salt, either on the surface, or layered between the gypsiferous rocks themselves. The map, indeed, showed small salt lakes (*saladas*) and salt pans (*salinas*), not far to the south of Bujaraloz. And we heard, at Calatayud I think, that there *are* salt mines in Aragon. We were little interested, and took no pains to verify the information, but it was a reminder that we were seeing nothing, on this journey, of an important side of the character of Spain—of Spain as a *mining* country.

Within a very short distance of the foot of the meseta the slope of hills had smoothed itself out. The road had braced into a taut curve that clung so nearly in a straight line to the broad undulations of the next ten miles that it seemed to be trying consciously to tighten the monotonous hours of march to their shortest.

We were bound for a place that we expected, judging from the map, to be rather more than a village, la Almunia de Doña Godina, the Orchard of Lady Godina, situated in the dehesa or pasture of Alfamén and already, doubtless, under the actual shadow of the sierras. This all felt very promising, very pastoral, but there was a long way still to go, and being able to see nearly all of it made it no shorter, in spite of the straightness of the road. We might, should, get to la Almunia by seven o'clock, but it was now only half-past three.

On our left, a field of lean, sparse wheat, and several men working a hundred and fifty yards from the road. Without warning, their dog made a snarling, vicious charge at us, an uncontrollable, savage thing driven by an impulse to tear and rend. Seconds allow of no preparation for defence. "Use your feet. Kick—hard—without mercy. Now!" But the alarmed shouts of the men had just overcome the deafness of the dog's ferocious instinct. At our feet, almost, he stopped, hesitated then turned and slunk back to his masters, growling in the uneven conflict between the acquired obedience of his dependent loyalty and his true nature. I take the onslaught of a dog as a fact; I had been frightened, but it was over, all but the reaction of suppressed excitement that makes me tremble in safety. You take it as an injustice; you were passionate with resentment against the dog, his masters, all other owners of all other treacherous dogs, and our unreadiness in danger. There hadn't been time even to pick up a stone. In a heat of precaution you enjoined me to "Have that goddam knife ready next time!" I had never before looked upon the big Solingen knife as an available weapon, but I put it at once where it would be instantaneously accessible in future—gave it a pocket to itself. But there never was any next time, for we found Spain as safe as it used to be in the days of the Holy Brotherhood.

Beyond the wheat were sweeping fields of red soil for miles. Low, undulating; earth stripped bare; and smooth in empty beauty. A land for swooping birds. Looking back, the wheatfield seemed to be close under the plateau, standing on the very toes of the plateau, in fact. The linesmen were coming down the road, but the dog back there would probably recognise a crowbar. Life, men, wheat, appeared to cling to the rising sides of this broad concavity that hung so flatly between the little plateau and the sierras. The wheatfield, owned and tilled by men who dwelt far from it, perhaps in some village on the Huerva, was a thing of the side. And la Almunia, our destination, was a thing of the other side. Between them nothing but a road strung tight across the vacancy of miles.

The long, straight road brought us within nineteen miles of

Goya's native village, Fuendetodos, during the afternoon. It lay to the south-east, over beyond the Huerva, too far away to be visited or seen, and unsuspected at the time. But we know that we were then in Goya's own *país.*

When there is nothing near at hand, when grass and rolling earth spread far to distances that change but slowly, there seems to be an expansion of the mind, a desire for the spirit to spread and occupy free spaces. Here there was so little to call us into the immediate present of actual place at the moment, and I remember the afternoon as one of those not uncommon periods when we walked for satisfied hours almost in silence, full of companionship, and in no need to talk. There is delight in that; in being silent without fear in the company of another person; in the understanding that silence can be natural, and more satisfying, at times, than conversation of any kind.

We missed the turnoff to the Huerva valley, to Goya's village, the only " incident" shown on the map. It was probably a dirt road or track that made hardly any mark upon the bare, red land. We passed by a large building situated in a hollow on the right, but it seemed to be deserted. An occasional backward glance showed the linesmen far behind us on the road, gaining a little on us, perhaps, but not likely to overtake us. Other than these things, nothing—silence, the regularity of our stride, in step all the time; warmth, and far, slow distances, and the mind roving.

Out across low Aragon my thoughts went, out over this wilderness of ledges and shelves and edges and tables and sagging lowlands, out in quest of the meaning of that poor, almost exhausted word, "beauty." Why is it the fashion among "super-realists" to be scornful of beauty these days? What is the beauty they pretend to scorn? Loveliness, charm, attractiveness, prettiness, low Aragon has not any of these attributes, which are shallow ones. They can tire the mind. It has little, even, of true grandeur, which can also tire the mind. It has none of those vivid, ready qualities that immediately stir the senses: freshness, colour, grace of form, decoration, perfume, round smoothness that can make the fingers itch to caress the far bosom of a hill. Sensuous beauty may excite the being to intense, immediate response, which subsides to leave nothing but an appetite for more. It has to be left and sought again;

has to be enjoyed rhythmically. But there is a beauty that enters the being more slowly, enters to remain, and it brings, not a wave of excitement, but a deepening satisfaction that may ultimately become part of the being.

And this is the kind of beauty that exists in low Aragon. Dull, monochrome simplicity. Zurbarán, Rembrandt, Velazquez, all transcended colour, in monochrome. An absolute value in light; all gradation and variety of shade in one tone—for this country has, to my memory, the yellow-brown earth-tint of dry almond shells. It has simplicity of line—and how often it is the long, nearly horizontal line of edge and shelf! Aridity, bareness of surface, and proud hunger that will never be appeased. Hollow space, and distance almost to boundlessness. The unusual domination of distance by low places, a kind of seated majesty. For, frequently on this journey, we looked from high places out across great distances, but only in low Aragon did we look nearly all the time out and up across the world. From low places. And the distance—how we strode across it! In a group of marching days that was the longest of our journey. Last Thursday, from Fraga to Bujaraloz, forty-six kilometres; on Saturday, thirty-seven; on Sunday, thirty-one; and to-day, Tuesday, it would be just fifty—long, uneven stages, imposed upon us by the emptiness of the country, the far separation of places. Only between Montauban and Toulouse had we covered such distance before, and then for a very different reason. Six whole days and part of two others, a first afternoon and a last morning, we were to spend in this country of low Aragon. Time enough in which to feel the full, strong power of its quiet enchantment of the mind; time enough in which to understand the profound subtlety that emerges from its broad, simple character; and time enough to allow of the slow penetration of its unsweetened beauty right into our beings.

Low Aragon is an abiding possession with me; the country, of all the countries and little *pays—paises*, that we traversed, to which I most often return, and which most satisfies. Yet what tourist, able to go where he pleases, to snowy mountains, green lakes, beautiful and lively cities, dazzling coastlines, would choose to go to Aragon? It offers no distractions, no excitement, no brilliance, no sports, no fun. Patient, gaunt, proud Aragon, safely remote, plain but habitable—an asylum and a land of refuge, with a hidden annealing glow of richness, and a calm, slow power of release. Aragon lies hollow, relaxed, without strain. It is peaceful there.

Perhaps we saw this country under conditions that were a little unusual, for those who walk across a country in six or seven days of early Summer must remember that there are other, different seasons in the year. A dry country, dry almost to sterility, but more and heavier rain fell on us while there than during any other time of the journey. I know that kind of rain well, know its ways, for it rains like that in those parts of Australia where the water-courses never flow unless it rains heavily. That heavy rain did not deceive me into thinking that Aragon is not a dry country, nor into thinking that it is one only on account of the stony poverty of the soil. It is a dry country, and the sun must beat with a glaring intensity on its hard surface in full Summer; and those bare sweeping lands must yield up rapidly to the night their basking, daytime warmth in Midwinter, and be cold, cold under the clear moon.

Then, too, the great rivers that make it a land of transit, Cinca, Gállego, Ebro. For us they were full, turbulent, heavily burdened. Are they always like that, or do they rise at times to spreading flood and sink at others to stagnant insufficiency? Ebro rolled along, muddy-brown—but heavy rains had just fallen, and might still be like to fall, and it was May; snows of the mountains would be melting now, to send an early-Summer flood far out over the land. Mountain streams are never so high at other times as at the melting of the snows, *la fonte des neiges*, as they say in Switzerland.

And the wind in Aragon? For us, the air was balmy and still, but would the extremes of the year bring hot storms of dust and sand in Summer; chill blasts of mountain air in Winter?

An arid country, but fraught with enchantment, and we loved it, you as much as I. Possibly there is no such thing as absolute taste, the true appreciation of relative merit, in general operation among people. The reasons for liking or disliking this or that may be rooted far more strongly in individual experience than in personality, and may thus depend little on the true quality of things. Few people, I suppose, would love Aragon as we do, and, if I fail to guess the reason for the depth of your interest, your enthusiasm towards the country, I can at least guess part of the reason for my own.

I encountered no other country that reminded me more strongly of the drier parts of Australia that are familiar to me. Three quarters of Australia are dry as Aragon, or drier. My experience knew this aridity as akin to something in which I grew, and to encounter it was to encounter something I understood—I knew *how* to look for beauty there; and knew the kind to seek. Even in colour and configuration I found parts of this hard, leafless land familiar. The very shallow that we were crossing now, with the Meseta de la Muela behind us, was like the Irwin River country and the hinterland of Geraldton in Western Australia, where also there are long, red mesas, ledges, flat-topped hills, steep, flattening curves, wheatland; where in moist hollows there are clumps of kurrajongs that are as richly green as the crops beside the Ebro. And there, too, the air is bright and still in late Spring—or early Summer—and the distances are long, space is boundless and lonely, and the life has made people hostly and generous.

Perhaps, too, there were deeper reasons to account for my love of Aragon. This lasting aridity, this remoteness from the peopled world, this lonely freedom for the wandering mind, this thin-veined fertility, this little store of bright treasure so safely hoarded and all but hidden, this very concavity of the land, which is the opposite of gravid—these are the marks and conditions of my own spiritual existence. To so much of Aragon so much of me gave direct response of recognition, of understanding, that I found myself close, close to the spirit of the land, in sympathy with it, and aware of its intensities of existence as if it had been another person to whom I might safely give my whole confidence and be sure of the right responses in doing so.

Does this all mean that, in loving Aragon, in saying "*That* was the best part of the journey," I am loving only a reflection of my own country and a reflection of myself, instead of some real, objective excellence that is Aragon? I am not sure. But I know that there is a most satisfying beauty in the bare, sunny lands of the earth, which people like Paul Morand, for example, children of the soft, green leafiness of gentle countries, do not understand.

And you, born in West Texas, why do you love Aragon? We have never talked about it, you know, any more than we talked of our mental excursions while crossing the hollow, empty plain this afternoon.

Half-past five made us feel that we were nearly to the other side. There was a change in the look of things, a suggestion that the earth was of use to men. A tall chimney rising from some village on the Jalón brought the Jalón closer. A factory? And ahead of us, on rising ground to the left of the road, a very extensive vineyard, the largest we had yet seen in Spain. The sierras loomed up massively now, but they, and the dark mouth of the gorge, were being partly hidden by a roll of long hills in front of us. La Almunia, still a good way off, was hidden, too, behind the hills.

The vineyard was a neat, clean thing, fresh-clodded earth in lumpy, smooth expanse, revealing the curvature of the acres in purity; revealing the rich, mottled gradations of red soil into redder soil, and of buff and ochre into rusty brown. The vines, young and newly planted in the nearest quarter, mature and leafy over the rest, were far apart, and pruned each to send upward three or four shoots that supported themselves. Primly free bushes they were, rather than vines, and they distributed an almost even hue of deep Summer-green over the mottled expanse of clean soil—everywhere the eye met knots of the same range of greens, but at no two places beneath them was the colour of the soil quite the same. Planted equal distances apart in perfectly spaced, perfectly straight rows, and only half the height of a man, they revealed to our passing, as we looked across them, that inner, unsought-for regularity of things that are regularly arranged; wheeling spokes of oblique rows that were never planned; a continual movement, almost, in opposed sympathy with our movement, of the vines, into dissolving series of converging rows, this way and that, as we walked along. Node-lattice opener than the lattice plan, showing in rhythmic moments of alignment. The witchery of neat orchards down the slope of passing gaze. And the health of this clean vineyard! Every vine robust, of clear complexion, and no blade of grass, no alien weed nor faint trace of disorder! Far from the hidden houses and, but for ourselves, deserted, it was nevertheless a close intimation of human care, human knowledge, of the orderliness and labour of mankind.

And on the other side of the road, always with us, the new poles of the telegraph line. And beyond them, in an open hollow, a camp of the line gang, a camp that looked as if it had just been established. The destination of the group of labourers behind us on the road. Man, man, man, putting all the fertile earth to use, and binding himself across the wilderness in exchange and thought and speech! Here, where there was not a man to be seen (for the linesmen were hidden by the folded ground), where no vehicle had passed in two hours; here, where no fixed abode offered security of refuge, the soil and the earth were in subjection to men who dwelt far off in gentler places—la Almunia, villages along the Jalón over there to the north.

Not so far away now, some of the villages or towns along the Jalón, and the tall chimneys rising from them were factory chimneys, without doubt. Uniformity of the mechanical age—Pittsburg, Osaka, Lucena on the Jalón, all with the same smokestacks of industry! And how the factories cling to the fruitfuller, gentler parts of the earth!

Once over the hill past the vineyard we found ourselves entering grassy vales; moving into a land that became greener and more freshly beautiful the further we advanced into it. This, we thought, must be the dehesa or pasture of Alfamén, on which Lady Godina, long since forgotten, chose to plant an orchard that has become a town. She chose well, to bring her Moorish bondsmen hither to till these lands that lie like a green fringe along the foot of the sierras; that lie within the zone of rains that condense along the high wall of central Spain.

Late miles of the afternoon brought us to the healthiest olive groves we had seen. The trees in some of them were very young, in others very old, but in all, sturdy; and the oldest ones were grotesque as bent old country people who are all brown sinew and wrinkled vitality at three score years and ten. There were trees along the road, there were fodder and vegetable crops and crops of grain, and there were neat irrigation ditches, fed, most likely, by little streams that tumble from the steep sides of the sierras, or even from the Jalón; and there were people working in fields. Life and labour and activity and incident.

In some places gangs of men were cleaning the broad irrigation ditches. Further on, a refractory donkey in full harness, trying to elude capture by a dozen men in pursuit. He comes our way, and because the men, seeing us, relax their efforts and so obviously expect us to make the capture, we offer no help and pass on. We have walked nearly forty-five kilometres, and the packs on our backs are heavy. Why should we add to the burden of a donkey's life at the end of such a day? There are men enough to catch several donkeys, men who understand the art; and besides, we object to being taken for granted, especially you.

At our six o'clock halt we discovered fatigue, on this, the second longest day of the whole journey. The bank beside the road was grassy and soft, and a canal lay behind it. An old horse tethered to a peg driven into the bank had just enough rope to enable him to come and sniff our heels, which he did, evidently in some hope of friendly conversation, but he turned away in disappointment and pity on hearing us talk in a foreign language. Peaceful cool of the evening, and people just beginning to leave the fields. We had still an hour, five kilometres, to go, and agreed that we felt fit, far less tired than at the last halt before Toulouse, and capable of going another ten or even fifteen kilometres if need be. Surely, this must be due to training, health, one of the rewards we had expected of the journey! People coming out from the fields—a boy with an armful of a coarse, green vegetable very like rhubarb. We get up, and become part of the open, slow procession that is gathering and moving in towards—but where *is* la Almunia? So close—we ought to be able to see it at any moment now.

Trees along the road. An estate on the left, with many, many trees and a double row of Lombardy poplars just inside the neat, wire fence—an Australian kind of fence. Now, there was an irrigation ditch beside the fence, but just *outside* it, and the relation of things looked, to us, a little suspicious. Lombardy poplars are heavy drinkers, and water beside the road, outside fences, is public water. A double row of trees, too. It all suggested that the lord of the estate (we thought that he must be a titled hildalgo) had planted his poplars where they would get water "on the grouter," to use a vulgar Australian expression that will go with the fence. Like "wowser," it is an expression whose meaning can be made clear only by pointing to examples.

A good road from the towns of the Jalón came in on the right, the only other road of the day, and along it a drift of people from the fields of that direction. Trees ahead, and a great, green hill athwart the way, a long billow covered with wheat. Once on top we should surely see the town. But from the top—wheatfield and pasture rolling up to the foot of the sierras, but no town. The road, however, had ceased to be straight. It led us down and around green rolls of wheat, bending, more and more to the left, in the nick of the fold between leftward hill and flat ground to the right, to bring us quickly around the swell of hills to a delighted halt.

A halt of embrace—of the whole town exposed! La Almunia de Doña Godina—a floating dome and a noble, richly brown church, skirted gracefully by town and trees and fields, in front of us! A lovely thing to see, to have revealed suddenly, as it was, at the end of a clear day.

The charm of peace belongs to very few places, but it belongs to la Almunia, seen from here. The great, buff dome, hanging like a mellow bell above the imposing mass of the church; above the lower spread of the rusty tan houses; above the wide sweep of green field and pasture; above the soft hills, had a calmness of quiet grandeur, made more grand by the sierras behind it all.

I understood, now, these domes of Aragon. There are domes in all parts of Spain. We saw them later, in Castile and León, heavy, pretentious domes in Madrid, Salamanca, Valladolid, but in those other parts of Spain they were not blown to happy form by the breath and spirit of the land as were the yellow domes of Aragon. There, they are the conscious gestures of their builders, but in Aragon it seems as if they rose inevitably, floated up from life itself, to brood over life that proceeds now in peace. In Catalonia, and on that eastern margin of Aragon, there are towers, things of suspicion, watchful, and the signs of fear. But in the heart of Aragon—I am speaking not only of low Aragon—are domes.

Domes that are grandly and exquisitely conceived are things of great power. Michael Angelo's dome seems to gather and enfold all Christendom within St. Peter's. Under Brunelleschi's polygonal dome in Florence the eyes are drawn up and held until the very spirit is lifted towards an infinity of elevation, raised, raised, as if for ever. Under the dome of St. Paul's, London endures in serenity. And this dome of la Almunia floated so stilly, as if with an assurance of peace.

The domes of Aragon must, I thought, be young—as the age of builded things is reckoned there. Of the seventeenth century, perhaps. Young, and dotted over the country like planets about the high, gilded, central dome of the church of el Pilar in Zaragoza, a dome which has beauty, and which reigns in the capital as a kind of still sun at the centre of a stilled solar system that spreads out over Aragon. Here, at la Almunia, was the giant Saturn. Young, and the high dome of el Pilar at the heart. Something orbital, something related, about them. Could it be that they had grown like focal cores of human trust, out of some spiritual ease and peace that had descended upon the land? Could it be that they had raised themselves to preside like symbols over an age of serenity that would never be broken, gathering into themselves, from all space and time around, some power that is holding this barren land of Aragon in equilibrium, at rest? Whether or not there be a meaning to be found in history for these domes, they have a meaning for the course of this land's life, and they are a manifestation of this land's genius. I find in them a serene restfulness and safety.

La Almunia itself was a place of rest, drawing its people towards it at the end of the day from the far miles around as if a curfew had called them home. Along the road, in front of us and behind us, and ourselves with them, drawn into the town.

We passed by several buildings that stood well apart from the compact mass of the town and had, both of us at once, the feeling that we were now "in town." We remarked on it, tried to understand it, but could find nothing tangible to explain the change of atmosphere, the sudden grip over mentality, that came from the town itself.

Such feelings are not uncommon, and are responses, perhaps, to the mass-consciousness of communities, which seems able to spread an influence around them that is not thought, but, rather, the medium of thought, and which communicates the mean of their activity, their essential energy, to an approaching alien. One man awake in a sleeping bivouac—a sentry—may feel this influence with great force, for he is an alien, a man awake, surrounded by the sleeping thought of a thousand who are living together more in their last interval of consciousness—that of the preceding day—than anywhere else. I have felt it myself when making rounds of inspection on troopships far out at sea in the dead of night. But a member of the group will not feel it while participating in the group's activity, for he is not then an alien. We, strangers, felt it suddenly, though not strongly, on entering la Almunia.

To enter the town we had to pass over a wide, empty moat and through a simple gate. Skirting the moat were extensive mews, long, blue stables, with dwellings in their upper stories. Our road, now a muddy street, became narrow, and passed between houses and shops of most irregular height straight towards the heart of the town. On a tall, substantial building we saw the sign "Fonda," but the activities just within were not those of an hotel. We consulted a boy who jerked a thumb over his shoulder to point to a staircase and said casually "Fonda en segundo piso—Second floor for the hotel." We climbed to the second floor—English, not American reckoning. To you it was the third floor.

The bustling patrona had a room, and would conduct us there at once. She came from the kitchen, wiping her hands on her apron, and she swept us by sheer force of volubility right into the room—Yes, a comfortable room, overlooking the street—Yes, two beds, most reasonable tariff, and of course meals, cena (dinner) tonight and almuerzo (breakfast) in the morning—Of course we would understand that the room belonged to another gentleman but she would let us have it—Certainly, everything the señores wished—She would arrange with the other gentleman and it would be all right. But oh, señora, why bother us about the other gentleman? And please get out! Eventually, when she did go, we threw ourselves down on the beds, comfortably tired, and remained there, stretched out at full length, for an hour. Fifty kilometres.

There are little moments of time that are so crammed with life that they have the length of hours, days. Not pages nor chapters would hold the recounting of them. There are other longer times of hours, days, and weeks of recuperation, when life seems to be stationary and thought has no impulse to move, yet existence is full with the quiet value of rest. The quality of that silent, motionless hour at la Almunia, when I did not sleep, was one of deep enjoyment and repose. I did not even think. And when, at about half-past eight. you got up and spoke of dinner, I found myself energetic, ready to enter the activities of that time of day. How splendid it would be, I thought, to be able to dress for dinner! We did dress for dinner, in our usual way, a procedure of brushing things, and of washing rather luxuriously, and of combing hair. Dinner time was so near that, instead of going out we preferred to look down on la Almunia from a height, and we "hung out of the window," as the nursemaids say.

The muddy street was very lively, very full of colour, crowded in the swarming, dense movement of paséo. Girls and women made at least half the number, bright, in their gay prints, as a cloud of petals fallen from Spring blossom, and each one a little unit, separate, moving as if afloat on a lazy, discoloured stream, in towards the centre of the town. Then back. Paséo surges backward and forward, an oscillating promenade.

A shop at the other side of the street bore the sign "*Ultramarinos.*" What could ultramarinos be? The houses all of different heights, many of them low, but some, a few, five stories high. Roofs cushioned heavily with woven pleating of tile, brown, cold in the evening light. Smoke of chimneys drifting and hanging. Smell of rain in the air. Trees, verdure, gentle security of life, and repose.

Dinner was served at a long table in a small room, a table d'hôte d'habitués. Five or six men came to sit at their regular places, and the dishes were put on the table for us to pass around to each other. The regular guests accepted us politely, displaying no curiosity about us, and talked with energy and interest among themselves. They did not look upon us as intruders, however, but made us feel that we were of the company even if unable to follow the allusion of their talk. We were at ease among them, and were given information readily when we asked for it. The new telegraph line, for example, interested everybody, and they explained that it was being laid from Zaragoza right to Madrid, by a company operating under Spanish control but using mainly American capital.

The front part of the floor below was occupied by a large café where we went after dinner for coffee. Boys and youths were playing billiards at several tables, and older men sat reading newspapers. The place was nearly full, but it had not that air of social congregation that made the cafés of Lérida and Zaragoza and Balaguer, and the little cafés of the villages, tingle with infectious life that seemed to accept us as part of it. Many people seemed to have come here independently, to sit apart, and the coffee itself was not good. We found the place too impersonal to please us, and remained there only a quarter of an hour.

There was no reason at all for going abroad into the town to do no more than seek another café. Our day had rounded itself out, come to an end, and we were satisfied. So we carried the weight of fifty kilometres of healthy fatigue upstairs to bed, to sleep. And we slept profoundly.

Brightly came the morning, but we let the sun rise a little high and were not at breakfast until half-past eight. No matter, for today's march would be a trifling one of only thirty-six kilometres. We paid a bill of twelve pesetas to this plain excellent fonda where everything was clean and sufficient, and we went out, not to see la Almunia, but to use it and to leave it. There was a purchase of cakes for lunch, from a shop near the fonda, and doubtless another, of cigarettes, which I have forgotten; and then, the attempt to act upon an idea.

We would see the great, brown church—go inside, and stand under the dome. But the town had the plan of a Chinese puzzle and we found the wrong church, one without a dome. Although the doors were open, we had no wish to enter the wrong church, so we looked, instead, for a way out of la Almunia, and that, too, was difficult to find.

A narrow street led us eventually across the dry moat, and we found ourselves again on the main road, which skirted the town for a short distance, a fine, shaded boulevard with stone benches under the trees. It swung back soon into the direction of Madrid, out and uphill towards the sierras. Morning traffic of laden asses and vehicles, bound from and to the town. Olive groves and grain, and vegetables, in rolling verdure. Here, beside the road, were rank clumps of the "rhubarb vegetable," with leaves like spreading parasols, green and dark as cooked spinach, and growing in moist places. And here, dug right along the crest of a ridge, was a slow canal that passed under the road. Leaning over the bank, a row of women, laundering in the muddy water.

This ridge commanded good views before and behind. Looking back on la Almunia we discovered it less fair than its revelation of yesterday evening. The morning light, the slope of the land, caused its known charm to evade us, and it had the hazy dinginess of receding Zaragoza, just as it had had the mystical attraction of approaching Zaragoza. But look back as we would, for the sake of looking back, it was forward that our minds were always truly cast. And the view ahead, from this hilltop canal, was one to set us walking again.

We were so close to the sierras that they had sunk behind their abrupt foothills. A grassy distance rolled openly forward to steepen into grassy mountain slope, less verdant, less cultivated than the dehesa behind us, and more thoroughly the world that is out of doors, the *forest*, in the original sense, the place where one is alone —and, indeed, there was no traffic here. To the south a village, Alpartir, clung to a ledge high up on the mountainside. No road for wheels leads up to Alpartir, which is one of a string of villages that are, perhaps, perched along this mountain ledge for twelve miles or so to the south-east (the suggestion is from the map)—Almoncid de la Sierra, Cosuenda, Aguarón, Paniza. To the west, not so black and threatening as yesterday, the gorge of the Jalón opened a fair gateway into the hills, and the road seemed to be running straight towards it.

For half an hour we approached the foothills, through trim olive groves and grassy fields, and the mouth of the pass lost itself in the confusion of the reëntrant, folded, mountain-margin. The road was leading us right in under the hills, perhaps to skirt them for some distance and then steal, by a quick, furtive turn, right into the pass. But it did nothing of the kind! Instead, it brought us unexpectedly to a shallow, gay little river that came out by surprise from a small ravine in the sierras to flow quietly over an open, pebbly course along the very foot of the hills, northward to the Jalón. The Rio Grío. And into its ravine the road turned at once.

There is no road through the gorge of the Jalón, and the negotiable "passes" are high across the mountains to the south-east of the river.

A yellow road now. And shut in by the narrow ravine. The hills were not very high but they were steep, exposing hard rock here and there, layered sandstone whose beds were tilted at high angles and thrown into acute folds. The floor of the ravine, unexpectedly gentle and absurdly narrow to cultivate, was a winding strip of wheat and poppies like a carpet in a corridor. An old building between road and stream had the dignity of an ecclesiastical ruin. No other house was to be seen. Under a bridge that crossed the dry bed of a rain-time brook a boy was playing with bright pebbles, alone. Where did he live? Further up, there was a little terracing of the hillsides. And then—the wall of the sierras.

A mountain of green barrier, that pressed the little stream aside—apart, almost—so that its main valley turned sharply to the south-east, to run beside the wall, sending a weak, opposite split to the north-west, along the wall. The ravine behind us was the down stroke of a T, leading straight up to the high roll of the Sierra de Algairén.

The wall or barrier was a formidable ridge of mountain, green with vineyards to the top, lofty and rounded, but most resolutely there and to climb. The road, gathering to itself another road that came over and down, from the railway on the Jalón, through the north-western split of the valley, wound steeply up and up and up, to a notch that seemed to be in the sky. A notch, or nick across the crest of the ridge, an artificial slot that deepened a natural sag in the skyline the more easily to hold the road, and first of the so-called "passes," the Puerto de Morata.

To there we must climb.

We watched the light traffic of people with donkeys moving slowly up and around the curves. They were coming, not from la Almunia, but by the other road from Morata de Jalón, the nearest place on the railway. The animals pulled themselves into an oblique distortion of gait; the few carts were swaying with a drag of loose, heavy resistance. But the telegraph line ran straight up and over the mountains at a bound. One pole, clear against the sky, beside the notch of the puerto. And there were stone towers, three or four old watch-towers, on a line that also ran straight up to the nick in the skyline.

We decided to take the steep, straight way, and fortune offered us a small, dry valley that made the beginning easier, the end harder, than the shortest way beside the telegraph poles. There was a track part of the way up the dry valley, leading to a caminero house where a small vineyard, a few olive trees, and a stone well invited us to make our second halt of the day and gather our strength for the last climb.

Ten minutes of gradually regulated breathing. Then, plod, plod, lifting rather than translating the body, stopping now and then for breath, until, after a long quarter of an hour, we clamber up an earth bank on to the road, panting, able only to grin a response to a muleteer's "Buenos dias!" We are at the Puerto de Morata, on the crest of the first of the sierras of high Spain.

And this is a dominating place, a last, as well as a first, place, the edge of high Aragon that overlooks the low. We stopped there, to embrace and survey the whole cavern of the lowland; to gather into contemplation the distances and incidents of a week that had seen our passing through a chosen country. And we stopped with a last hope that we might see the Pyrenees. But the view, expansive and grand as it was, differed little from that view of hazy lowland lost in ultimate, brown, mountain haze, that we had seen from the north-eastern edge of the Meseta de la Muela yesterday. Far, far, and perhaps not real, was the glint of snow in the northern foot-band of the sky, and beneath it, here, there, some ridge or dim peak sharpened the vague festoons of the haze.

The nearest crests of the Pyrenees would be a hundred and ten miles from here, to the east of north; and the point where we had crossed them, a hundred and seventy-five miles, in a straight line, to the east-north-east. Too far. In clear weather, from the bridge of a steamer, I have seen very high land a hundred and ten miles away, as a faint outline against the sky, barely visible—but, the Pyrenees from here? They had sunk, I believe, down behind the curve of the earth. All before us was low Aragon, modestly dull, and merged into deceptive simplicity—pale almond-brown.

It had been Judea, a discovery and a symbol, a land of peace and slow, permanent beauty; secretly, intimately, an influence; and now, a lasting possession. The inmost, lonely quality of such a land spreads the mind wide open to space of thought that goes beyond devotion. And on the breast of that land, out there, the rivers have drawn a cross of living green that will endure as life endures. And held at the very centre of the cross is the land's rich heart itself—Zaragoza, mother of domes.

The past, to be held, must not only enter into, but must also become part of, one's self. We turned from it, and walked through the cutting: into a different Spain.

XXVI

APPROACH TO NEW CASTILE

(a) *Leaves*

How close we were to Moncayo! In the approach to the sierras their hourly growing height, and the hourly increasing obliquity of the great mountain's position with respect to us, had done much to exclude it from our thoughts. Then had come a kind of imprisonment in the ravine of the Rio Grío, and the mountain was forgotten. But now, after walking through a short hundred yards of cutting in the crest of the sierra, we find the sierra to be a wall behind us, through which we had passed to enter a new, fresh world of colour, with the great mountain unexpectedly at our sides as if it had stepped up, to be close to us, while we were not looking. And although, seen through the clear mountain air, it appeared to be a neighbouring peak, it was still thirty-one miles away. From this abrupt moment of its near, neighbouring presence it would begin to recede, withdraw from us, ultimately to disappear.

Close to Moncayo, in a high, mountain world that was entirely new! Variety and freshness, and a feeling in the air as if it had just cleared after rain. And colour, colour, colour! And a soft, round, gentleness of form. And fruitful verdure. It all came to us like relief, as if we had been parched, thirsty for days and days past, and unaware of it until now. And it *was* relief, change, a refreshment of the mind that seemed to make our mental activity, our power to receive and retain impressions, inexhaustible. We embraced this new region with fervour. Oh, Aragon behind! But the fervour was rooted in curiosity, interest, not in allegiance; was the effect of change, and not that of profound beauty.

We were on the southern side of the valley of the Arroyo Trasmón, a steep little stream that runs down a tilted fold in the sierras to the Jalón. The valley sank and widened rapidly to the north-west; rose and narrowed just as rapidly to the south-east, and the road hung loftily, looped into the valley-head, to come out and disappear over the crest on the far side, opposite us. There were only two directions—down, and the widening north-west. To move with ease in any direction things must keep high here, crawl around, by level, angular paths, and not attempt to cross by the breathless ups and downs. A little world of two sloping, slanting walls, and outside it, mountains everywhere.

Colour and verdure! The whole valley was a terraced garden of olive trees and vines, tilled to the very bottom—and tilled to the very tops. Purple, chocolate, and red-brown, the soil, moist and soft in colour, smooth and gentle even in the steep roundness of its folds. The road itself was purple. And there was a close presence of life. In the fields and on the road a movement of men and animals. A string of workmen on donkeys going to el Frasno, the one village of the region, a place nipped into the head of the "V" of the valley. We followed them. Just outside the little town they turned off the road and went down a rocky trail that led into the town's lower end. We still followed them—were, indeed, catching them up. The rear member of the party was one of those Spaniards who, as the officer of the guard at Bujaraloz said, are muy curiosos—very inquisitive—and he was a determined conversationalist. He shouted friendly questions at us, and somehow America got into the conversation, which brought the stentorian news "Tengo un hermano en América—I've a brother in America."

"Está donde en América su hermano? En Nueva York?—What part of America's your brother in—New York?" we shouted back.

"No. En Buenos Aires," came the answer. Always, to them, it meant South America, unless we said definitely *los Estados Unidos*. But he, and his friends, who took no notice of the shouted conversation, were bound for outlying houses. We called out good-bye and turned up a street that led steeply into the village.

El Frasno was a squalid place of stone buildings, with a crumbling church and a half-abandoned air. Have people left this place, we wondered, left this fertile valley to seek a living elsewhere? It seemed to be so. A sleepy place, too, and we had trouble in finding the shops. We bought sardines, wine, and water (the last for you!) in a shop on the corner of the square and were entertained while doing so by a baby. Three or four women and girls were admiring the baby so much—it seemed to be on exhibition—that it "frowed up" quite thoroughly. The business of the shop was suspended until the baby was cleaned and the floor was cleaned, after which they remembered that we wanted to buy something. They were pleasant folks, however, and they sent a little girl with us to guide us to the bakery, where we heard once more the local words for pennies and half-pennies, but they were not the words used at la Muela. The old señora-bakeress did her reckoning in the rural French system of sous, and stated the result in dialect. We asked for a conversion of the statement into pesetas and centimos, which confused the old lady so much that the little girl had to come to her aid with a readier mental arithmetic.

This really finished our business in el Frasno, but, as we thought that a coffee would do us good, we went back to a café on the square, noticing on the way a large, well-stocked provision store with the sign "Ultramarinos" on it, a place where we might have bought more than sardines. After keeping us waiting a long time for the coffee, the patrón, a very dark, solemn man with a black moustache, bad teeth, and no collar, desired to converse with us, and did so as if the three of us were noblemen of equal rank.

His manner of speech was new to us: very slow, deliberate, unusually soft in spite of the strong tone of voice. Those letters that have the sound of *th*, or a mere suggestion of it, in Castilian, he pronounced not in the hard way of *th*ing, *th*ought, but in the soft way of *th*is, hi*th*er, etc., and he almost lisped them. Even Calatayu*d*, the next big town, he called Calatayooth, and Ma*d*ri*d* became Mathreeth. He was interesting as a sign of differences, and he was interested in us, wishing us feliz viaje—bon voyage—as we left.

A bad street led us on to the good road again, which belted the hills like a carriageway passing through a well-tended estate. The air smelt of rain and the sky was overcast—indeed, rain seemed imminent, and, as there was no telling how long it might last, we decided to have lunch without delay. A curve of the road led us into a niche, the head of a small valley, where there was a tiny, ever-so-green patch of wheat in the corner, and a small, terraced olive grove held in the bend on the downward side of the road.

The olive grove was the right place for lunch, so we took possession of it. A girl and a woman were pulling weeds and grass from among the wheat up there behind us, and presently a boy with a team and a plough came to the grove and began to plough the already well-ploughed terraces. Other people passed out along the road with teams and ploughs, going, most likely, to groves further from el Frasno.

We suspected a meaning in this movement of ploughs in the late morning, and we found it. On the downhill side of each olive tree, and about a yard out from the base, was a crescent of hilled earth, evidently to hold back the water when it rained. The sky was overcast—it was going to rain soon. And rain soaks most easily into freshly broken soil. Therefore, we concluded, even here, where everything was at present so fresh and moist, rain is so valuable that el Frasno, evidently on the alert, was acting at once, on the mere threat of rain.

But a week of rainy weather had brought such a gentle, colourful freshness of Spring to these mountain slopes that we had been deceived into thinking that we were in a region of abundant rainfall here. Were it not for the boy and the plough, we might still be thinking so. Did you, however, see the Trasmón at el Frasno? If it were running it must have been running under the village, unless it has the dimensions of a drain. I do not remember crossing the stream that ought to be there.

The boy who was ploughing the terrace passed up and down, close behind us, taking not the slightest notice of our presence. Let him plough, and I'll tell you the story of the bewitched bottle of ink.

THE STORY OF THE BEWITCHED BOTTLE OF INK

Once upon a time, in the days of President Coolidge and King Alfonso XIII, there were two fellows who called each other Max and A. A., given credit for enterprise that he did not have, was nearly old enough to be the father of Max, but that made no difference to them, because A. had never properly grown up, and was much younger than his years, while Max, who had been more fortunate in experience, had grown somewhat beyond his years, so that they were able to look upon each other as equals in intelligence. They could do that because they were both very intelligent. And their intelligences were so different, that of A. the more educated and analytical, that of Max the more sensitive and observant, that they found themselves extending the range of each other's experience whenever they looked at anything, which was all the time.

And on account of that, they were never bored with each other's company.

They were both what is called "crazy," because they believed that life is too precious a thing to be let become a habit, or to be made stale and dull and monotonous, if there were anything else that it could be made. When they found that some of the things that each of them wanted to do with life were exactly the same, they decided to start doing them together, if they could. They were able to start together, in spite of their ages, only because A. had woken up and begun to discover that he was alive much later than Max did. One of the things that they both wanted to do with life was to go to Spain, so they tested some of their ideas by going there together, and it worked beautifully most of the time because they seldom lost their tempers with each other.

They walked every step of the way and went so far that they got lost, and got so lost that they forgot altogether that they had relations and friends and belongings and affairs somewhere else. And when they had walked nearly into the middle of Spain they sat down under an olive tree on a mountainside, between el Frasno and Aluenda, to eat sardines. What is an olive tree like, did you ask? An olive tree is about as tall as a ladder—the kind of ladder they use when they prune olive trees—and it has a trunk and branches about as thick as legs and arms, and they get very twisted and their muscles and sinews get all knotted and grooved and split from rheumatism when the tree grows old. If it's a good tree it hasn't many branches, just three or four that spread apart and give it a nice, round crown. The twigs are springy, and the leaves are stiff and shaped like little spindles about an inch long, and they're nearly bottle-green on top and silver-grey underneath. Because they're so small, and not thick on the tree, and because the wind moves them and their two colours showing at once make them look as if they weren't there, you can look right through an olive tree and see what's behind it. And if it's away over on a far hillside, you can look and not see anything at all but hillside. Just the kind of tree for a bottle of ink to get bewitched under—but you musn't interrupt me. Sardines—oh, they ate the sardines and started to eat cake. They ate the cake too.

Well, because they were crazy they used to talk about crazy things, and here they talked about olive wood. Max pointed to the trunk of the tree they were under and said:

"A., a good-sized piece of olive wood must be rare."

You see, the tree was very old, but the trunk wasn't as thick as a fat lady's thigh, and the wood was all twisted and split as if the lady had been on the rack.

"Yes," said A., "rare; and the grain ought to be very handsome. Ever seen dressed olive wood?" he asked, thinking of the lady.

"No," answered Max, "but old wood like that, carefully selected and well-seasoned, ought to be dense. Take a good polish. Might even have a perfume."

"Wouldn't you like to have little boxes and small articles of furniture made out of it?" asked A.

"Now wouldn't that be just like us!" responded Max, quite delighted. "Just like us," he continued, "to have useless things—no! if they were ours they wouldn't be useless—made out of olive wood, simply because olive wood must be rare—and expensive!"

This evidently gave Max ideas, because he took a large green notebook and the bottle of ink out of his knapsack and began to write. He usedn't to write in the notebook very often but he did sometimes, and he never showed A. what he'd written, and A. never asked to see it. A. had a notebook, too, but he never wrote anything in it.

A. was fairly used to this sort of thing, so he leaned up against the olive tree and nearly went to sleep. He would have gone right to sleep (that has something to do with what they drank) if Max hadn't called out all of a sudden:

"Look! Did you see that?"

"What?" asked A., who hadn't seen anything.

"Watch that ink bottle," ordered Max, as seriously as a mother saying "Now, you do what I tell you!"

A. watched the ink bottle until he got tired of it and nearly went to sleep again, but just as he looked away Max got quite excited, and sounded as if he was annoyed with A. for being inattentive.

"Look!" he called, "it did it again."

"Did *what*?" asked A., impatiently.

Max became solemn like a man in the presence of a mystery, and answered very quietly and impressively:

"It *bumped.*"

"Bumped?"

"Yes. *Bumped.*"

A. did watch the ink bottle now, and surely enough, after a little while, it gave a bump, as if it were alive and were trying to upset itself but couldn't. A. was convinced now, and they both sat watching it in silence. And every now and then, sometimes after a little while, sometimes after a long while, the bottle of ink bumped, as if it were trying to spring straight up off the ground, or as if it felt uncomfortable where it was sitting and were trying to shift into an easier position.

A. thought that a poltergeist, quite an inexperienced, beginner of a poltergeist, might be the cause of it, and he half expected the bottle of ink to spring up and hit him on the nose at any moment. The cork was out too. But there seemed to be no reason at all why the bottle of ink should bump. It never did so enough to splash, but it looked as if it might.

They wanted to know why this was happening, so they became scientific about it, and A. dismissed poltergeists from his mind because they have no place in science yet. Without touching anything, they examined all the surroundings of the ink bottle. Max had put it down very neatly on the middle of a flat rosette of dandelion leaves, which ought to have been a most comfortable seat for such an ink bottle. For a yard around there was nothing but grass and other dandelions, all growing flat and matted and close to the ground. There wasn't a thing nearby that could make an ink bottle —or a dandelion—bump. They looked in the grass for insects and other creatures that might hunch their backs up if they had ink bottles put down on them, but they found nothing bigger than tiny ants. They pressed other dandelion rosettes lightly with their fingers, and lifted the leaves up gently, to see if there was anything naturally springy about these particular dandelions, but there was nothing.

They decided then to steal up on the ink bottle and take it by surprise. They thought that Max might have put it down on top of a beetle who was losing his temper trying to move it off him. Max was to lift the bottle off the dandelion very quickly, and examine it. A. was to keep his eyes fixed on the dandelion, and not to look away at anything else. Not a thing on the bottle, underneath, on top, anywhere; and nothing inside it but ink! Not a thing on the dandelion either!

And the dandelion kept perfectly still. After waiting long enough to feel sure that it was not the dandelion that was bumping, they pressed it gently in the middle with their finger tips. Then they pressed it hard. But they couldn't feel anything moving at all. They put the bottle on other dandelions, one after another, giving it plenty of time on each, but it kept quite still on them all. They put it back on the original dandelion, and at once it bumped again, and kept on bumping, just as before. So they looked at each other and both said:

"Well I'm damned!" which is an expression of wonder.

There was nothing left to do but to investigate the dandelion thoroughly. (Am I using words that are too big?) They removed the bottle of ink and then parted and combed all the grass around the plant without finding so much as an ant. They parted the leaves of the dandelion again, carefully, but there was nothing between them. They lifted them and scratched into the soil underneath, but there were no worms nor cracks in the soil, nor anything that could make things move.

Then, with great care, they pulled the dandelion up, and examined it and the place where it had grown. The plant had a long, cream-coloured root that was not elastic, and it had grown in firm soil. They pulled more dandelions up, to compare them, but they were all alike, and there was nothing about them that could have made an ink bottle bump.

So Max cut the long root neatly off the original dandelion, and put the flat rosette of leaves into his notebook to press and take home as a relic. And that, my child, whoever you are, is the true story of the bewitched bottle of ink—isn't it, Max?

It is not a good story, because a good story is supposed to have a strong plot, a satisfactory development, and a satisfying dénouement, as they call it. A good story is one that gets you all puzzled and then lets you into the secret by surprise, near the end. This one only gets you puzzled.

The people who like good stories are people who think that everything has a simple explanation, but if you look closely at life, and listen to true stories, you soon discover that very few things in the world have a simple explanation, or any real explanation at all. Life is mysterious, and that is what makes it always wonderful, even when it is unhappy, or even sorrowful. But most people are a little frightened of the mystery, and instead of going out and living, they settle into safe corners, after work, and enjoy nothing but the safe, make-believe adventures that they find in good stories. And as long as people are like that they will prefer good stories to true stories, and will refuse to believe in wonders and mysteries that can't be explained.

This story is perfectly true—true as the other fantastic little stories I have told in this book, and if you know anything about symbols you will understand them all and feel that they are true. If, on the other hand, you are a literal person and do not believe in symbols, but believe instead that human thought and life and action will all some day be explained by a succession of chemical reactions in the brain and body, you will then declare that they are nonsense. And I will say : "Tommy-rot! You're a vain, simple, ignorant person, lacking in intellectual courage." For nobody misses, and actually avoids, so much of the real world as the professed realist. He believes that realism and materialism are the same thing.

Of course, you will tell me that I have said all this merely because I cannot write good stories. I cannot write them. And it is because I cannot make-believe that life consists of nicely arranged complications that can all be disentangled and simply explained. Life is too big and intricate and fine and subtle a web for that. Nothing can possibly be invented that is more interesting than life itself, inexplicable, common life—more wonderful, more diverting, more full of adventure than any make-believe. The best things that go into books are extracted from life by observation and understanding, and are not invented. There can be enough in one hour of life to fill books, and fill them splendidly—provided that you don't insist upon having explanations.

Concerning the bewitched bottle of ink, there is a little more to add, but I will not assert that it is all true, because reports from the United States are so likely to be exaggerated.

Max took the dandelion rosette home with him to Texas after this journey in Spain was finished. About a year later he wrote me a long letter, with which he sent a number of Corroborative Clippings from Newspapers, to say that the dandelion had been found to possess extraordinary power as a charm.

He found this out himself, one night when he came in from the woods covered with the inflammation caused by poison ivy. (Never mind what poison ivy is.) He was looking through the Spanish notebook and happened to pick the dandelion up. At once the inflammation left him and he was quite well again. Thinking that the cure might be due to the dandelion, he said nothing about it, but tried it again, some time later, for chiggers. (Never mind what chiggers are.) It worked!

Since then it has been used with success against the cotton boll weevil, burning oil wells, cyclones, and bank robberies; and it has swollen the harvest of salvation at several revival meetings, besides curing a number of drunkards, reckless drivers, and other people of lesser afflictions. Max wrote that he has known it to fail only on those occasions when he has been offered a fee for its use.

So valuable have its remarkable powers become that the most solemnly religious convention of that land of conventions has ordained that the dandelion be regarded as a relic—which Max has always considered it to be—and the convention has started a campaign to raise a million dollars for the construction of a shrine at Corsicana, Tex., where the relic will be preserved in perpetuity as the property of the people.

Thenceforth, only its emanation, which has, when perfectly fresh, all the power of the dandelion itself, will be used. Arrangements are being made to supply fresh emanation in vacuum tubes to all *bona fide* applicants. Thousands have already applied.

That concludes the story. If I have told it lightly instead of seriously, so much the better, and that doesn't make my part of it any the less true.

. . . .

How's that, Max? You know, you did take it home. But I'll revert to the much longer story that I'm telling you, in which I hope that you will detect no untruth nor statement that is not sincere. Inaccuracies there may be, due to the faultiness of memory; and things there must be which we saw and felt and understood in different ways, but may there be nothing which you would say at once is false.

When we finished our lunch and packed up the notebook and the bottle of ink, the boy was still ploughing; but even when we left the little grove the rain had not yet come. It seemed to be holding off.

The road brought us around heavy shoulders of the mountains, and took us out of the gaping valley of the Trasmón into, and out of, the valleys of lesser streams that are not shown on the map, but all of them falling steeply to the Jalón, to the north-west. A lopsidedness of things, that communicated a feeling of slipping instability, as if the road itself might come loose in places and lie or hang like a thread caught only on projections.

About an hour after lunch the rain came down, finely, gently, and we took shelter under a handsome old walnut tree that stood alone on a small terrace. Its bold, yellow-green foliage sifted an open shower of big drops out of the misty rain, giving so poor a shelter that you, justifying the activity with the remark that it was the proper time for our halt anyway, went out into the rain to search the ground for walnuts. You found one, I think, sodden from a year's repose, and were highly pleased, for the reward lay in the success of the search and not at all in the quality of the thing found.

This tree stood nearly at the top of a small, picturesque valley that opened a gentle, Highland scene to the north-west. Down the slopes of the opposite hill sheep were browsing, scattered apart, and moving with the jerky, active attention that animals display when greedily foraging. Their bells tinkled through the rain, a desultory, irregular splashing of cheap, tinny little noises that were not at all displeasing; were, indeed, quite pleasing, for their contrast with the sound of one beautiful bell that rang clear, the one glint of light on a dull surface—the one bright spirit in a stupid crowd. And how rare bright spirits are!

People were going up the road behind us in covered carts drawn by donkeys. The people in every cart that passed stared curiously at us, and with such attention that the last cart nearly collided with an automobile that was coming the opposite way. Traffic—sheep on the purple hills—uncertain rain. This misty vale in the lost fastnesses of the Sierra de Algairén felt not half so remote, not half so lonely, as the bare plains of the outworld.

Following the donkey carts up the road we came, sooner than we expected, to the second of the "passes," the Puerto del Frasno. It lay at the peak of the sharp curve where the road doubled back to wrap itself around the far side of the falling spur of the sierra and so throw the wave of its line back into the head of a further valley. This puerto was also a short cutting through the crest of a ridge, but, unlike the Puerto de Morata, it had not that character of a defile which makes a true pass. The Puerto de Morata was, so to speak, at the head of a staircase that led the road up to and through a natural notch in the top of a wall. The Puerto del Frasno, however, was only a device of the road engineers, a passage that made the turning of a corner easier, blunter, shorter, than if they had carried the line of the road all the way around the surface angle of the mountain spur.

It admitted us, however, into a long, straight valley which, like all the others we had crossed so far, plunged steeply towards the Jalón. The stream that runs down it can have little importance, for it was not shown on our map. But the persistence of the direction of these minor streams, and of the mountain spurs between them, is of regional importance here. Line of crest and valley and human road streak the map of this part of the country as if all things were parallel. The land has, here, what Professor J. W. Gregory, of Glasgow, calls a natural "grain," which is due to the trend of the folded bands of rock that lie beneath it. Their heavy layers, tilted at high angles, come to the surface edgewise, and form a series of parallel belts, made alternately of hard and soft rocks, which stripe the country from east-south-east to west-north-west. The little rivers have cut their valleys down into the soft belts, and the hard belts rise up between them as parallel sierras.

As far as the Puerto de Morata the mountains of this morning were made of hard rocks, layered sandstones, which form a resistant edge to this part of the plateau of high Spain. But the valley of the Trasmón is carved out of softer rocks, claystones and shales, to judge from the brilliantly soft colours and moist character of the soils. Here, at the Puerto del Frasno, we had come again on to harder, grittier rocks, that stood out as a long spur; pushed the road out, in a sharp angle, further into the north-west than it had swung for some miles.

In such banded country the easiest ways of movement lie along or between the bands; but that direction, here, is an unimportant one for drainage and for life. The main river of this part of the plateau must *cross* the edge, to bear its water to Ebro. And people must cross the edge, to pass to and from Castile and low Aragon.

The crossing of such a banded edge is difficult. The Jalón, here, has had to saw a winding gorge down through soft and hard rocks alike, and in doing so has drawn to itself a number of little tributaries that have carved the banded zone into parallel valleys and intervening sierras that fall towards the Jalón from the west-north-west and the east-south-east (our side), so that the hard ridges face each other across the river like prongs, and the valleys lead life and movement down to and across the river by secondary roads and tracks that follow an unimportant direction. But *along* the river, that is, across the banded zone, there is no easy movement, for the hard spurs of the sierras lie like bars across the way. Only for the railway line has the valley of the Jalón been an economical channel of movement in modern times.

The one main road across the banded zone, our road, has had to keep high up, to throw itself like a tortuous girdle around the hard spurs and into the heads of the soft valleys. And between the "passes" or puertos of to-day it hangs to the slopes on a level about a thousand feet above that of the Jalón and far to the south-east of the river—as much as five miles from it in places. And the high crests and knobs of the sierras are another thousand feet above the level of the road. The minor drainage to the Jalón has lowered their general height somewhat, but the highest peaks of the neighbourhood nevertheless exceed three thousand feet, which is the mean height of the northern part of the Castilian meseta.

The Puerto del Frasno, admitting us into a nameless valley, admitted us into a different kind of world. Here were no terraced slopes of olive groves and vineyards. Here were rock, and steep pasture, open, grassy slopes where sheep were browsing, long views, and, far down below us, figs and walnuts growing beside the stream like a vein of Spring in an umber landscape.

Far across the valley we could see the third "pass," the Puerto Cavera, and the telegraph line plunged from where we were standing, down to the stream, to leap thence upward on the other side on a line that led it straight across to the third "pass." The road clung a little dizzily to the steep slope, on a line almost at right angles to that of the telegraph—the direct and the indirect ways—and in some places it was supported by embanked stonework. But it was no longer a tortuous, winding, oscillating road. It swept, now, in a long, gentle line of long gentle waves, into the head of the valley. Downward. Downward—yes. Because the whole, waving zig-zag of this road is tilted slightly sideways to the south-east, that is, to our left, so that its line may touch the villages at the heads of the valleys, which are lower than the "passes" out on the spurs.

At one place there was an old man sitting by himself on the roadside, and we wondered what he could possibly be doing in such a place, until, on rounding a flat bend, we saw his sheep fifty feet below us at the foot of the embankment. Once past him we walked for a whole kilometre that was nearly straight, talking, now and then, of the coffee we would have when we got to Aluenda at the head of the valley.

But Aluenda was too sorry a place to possess a café. A tiny stone village without a church, and it greeted us with untidy, overgrown back yards and abandoned houses that were already in the disrepair that precedes ruin. On turning a corner we discovered four or five houses facing the brook that were neat and prosperous in appearance, but from here, as from el Frasno, people have gone away.

Their reasons for having done so were clearer to me now. These mountain valleys are isolated and separate little worlds, and, in spite of their vines and olives and sheep, they are poor and can support few people. In some years their vintage, their small crop, and their pasture might even fail. They are not easily accessible to each other nor to the world outside, and there is nothing, no focal place, to draw them together with the coherence of common interests. They point only to the gorge of the Jalón, whence no road leads out: where there is no town. La Almunia behind, and Calatayud ahead, are both a difficult way off, a full day's journey there and back for the donkey carts, which leaves the several railway sidings along the Jalón as the only outlet for these valleys. Their life cannot organise in any effective manner, and the consequence is, disadvantage. What more natural than for people to go away—to Buenos Aires, like the brother of the muleteer of el Frasno?

It reminded me of Lot, and of places along the Dordogne, and of the whole problem of rural depopulation, a problem that does not belong to France alone, and one that is ultimately, I believe, a consequence of modern organisation, modern transportation, and modern supply, which are making it less and less profitable, less and less possible, to till the land of old countries on the small scale of individual ownership and hand labour. The signs of depopulation are written heavily on places like Lot and these little vales of the sierras where disadvantage is enormous, but the effects have long been visible in France, even in places where the country looks rich and productive, and the French are aware of it.

In the impending phase of our civilisation it may prove that England gained an advantage when she ceased to be a farming country. This is the Mechanical Age and Profit is its God. Possibly it is an unwise age, but the power of mechanism and organisation is irresistible while the faith in them lasts; or, as some are even now ready to say, until the falsely-rooted part of that faith be torn out. And meanwhile, innumerable places like Aluenda will decline, for, in times of peace, men are ever disposed to do the profitable thing first, and will forsake their homes and homelands to do it.

If we were disappointed to find no café in Aluenda, there was a cordial greeting from a group of women sitting at the bend of the road, and we were pleased with the water of the nameless brook. We drank there, while a light shower of rain passed quickly over us. The brook was supposed to flow through a gallery in the base of the stonework of an embankment on which the road swung sharply to the other side of the valley, but the embankment had acted as a dam, and the dam had filled with rubble and sand, so that the brook, defeating the engineers, had come to flow quietly across the road and over the embankment in a trickling waterfall. It nourishes fine walnut trees in front of the village, trees whose vernal foliage was a yellow emphasis of the presence of Spring.

And Spring was the meaning of a whole series of changes, differences, between this land and the last. Spring! Back in low Aragon Spring was darkening, roughening into Summer, but here it was at the height! We had ascended two thousand feet and found ourselves weeks back in time. The olive trees at el Frasno were just in bloom, and so modestly that we had to step up to them and handle the loose, green spikes of tiny, dull white blossoms before we were sure that they were in bloom. Olive blossoms—little white stars no bigger than a pin's head, almost deliberately inconspicuous, but big enough, conspicuous enough, to tell us that we had really entered a new country and come back to Spring.

The new country was not merely high Aragon, for high Aragon has not that separate individuality which stamps and distinguishes a country. High Aragon is only part of the much larger country of high Spain, the Castilian meseta, which embraces León, Old and New Castile, Estremadura, and la Mancha, as well as the part of Aragon that lies on the plateau.

Here, among the sierras, we were in the zone of transition, where differences show and influences mingle, between high Spain and low Aragon. We met the first signs of change as far back as la Almunia, which is really a frontier town. Not even its aspect is typically Aragonese, for the spread of low buildings is rendered uneven by houses that are much taller than their neighbours. Aragon builds low, but Castile has found no regular habit in the matter—high or low, according to convenience. At the fonda in la Almunia we sat for the first time at a long table d'hôte for dinner, and we were to do so again in Castile, but further back, in Aragon and Catalonia, we used to sit by ourselves, or at small, round tables with other people. And we slept, at la Almunia, in ugly iron bedsteads of a familiar, British kind, which England seems to have sold in larger numbers to Castile than to Aragon or Catalonia. Then, too, there was a sign at el Frasno that we had seen no further back than la Almunia—"Ultramarinos," which designates a dry goods store, where tea, coffee, spices, nutmegs, and all sorts of commodities from "overseas" are sold. We were to find many of the better grocery stores of the plateau bearing the sign "Ultramarinos."

Once up in the sierras, it was evident that we were among different people, easy-going people who were not to be hurried and who spoke a slightly different language. We heard words for pennies, dialect words, that were quite different from the ones used at the last place where we had heard them—la Muela. And even our foreign ears detected the softer pronunciation of the man at the café in el

Frasno. Doubtless he spoke with mannerism, but the speech was different from any we had heard before.

These are not fundamental differences between two countries. Indeed, some of them are trivial ones, but they are the little, superficial signs that can easily be noticed; are the things which mark the change, for people who pass, like ourselves, not too rapidly across the land. We felt the depth of the change in people not yet, for customs and ways of life were not unlike what had gone before. But the force of a great change had impressed itself upon us at once, in the season, and in the scenery.

And the scenery was becoming magnificent. Once around the bend at the head of the valley and we were walking up the long, gentle slope of the road, facing the open, north-western view. There was a feeling that we were really among mountains. For we were able to survey the massed grandeur of hills that could be seen from their bases to their summits. And behind them, beyond them, an aspiring recession of hills, of crests, of shoulders, ranked and rising along the gulfs and inlets of distance between the nearer hills, up to a bold, ultimate, intercepted line against the sky, a line that was the last high wave of dwindling echo backward from form to rhythmic form. Moncayo, in these last hours, had wrapped itself slowly in the general confusion of mountains, had passed and sunk behind them, and was now submerged. And they were the grander for its absence.

We asked each other whence the power of these little sierras could come, for, to be lost in them was to feel a grandeur as inspiring as that of the serried Pyrenees about us. The answer is that we could see them whole, from base to summit; and from within the fastnesses of any mountain chain or system, however absolutely high the chain itself be reared, it is unusual for masses grander than these modest sierras to rise whole before one out of the confusion and eclipse of mass by mass. For, in among the mountains, their grandeur depends less upon their height than upon how much of them can be seen at once.

We were able to see these mountains whole because the straight, nameless valley sank and spread to the Jalón, and the road, climbing ever higher and higher along the valley-side, raised us to such a height that we were coming to overlook the main valley itself.

A little traffic passed us: donkey carts, going towards Aluenda, one of them drawn by a perverse, jolting beast who succeeded in twisting the cart across the road at a narrow place. Then came a polite automobile with a burden of well-dressed ladies who looked English. They were bound, most likely, for Zaragoza, and desired nothing more, it seemed, than to get there quickly, to leave these tiresome mountains behind and get to a civilised place where, if one is not "somebody," one can at least look like "somebody," even if it be only in an hotel. What made us think so? The ladies had that look of superior, patient endurance that refrains from accusing common donkey carts of being in the way; a look in which there was an unvoiced complaint against tortuous roads that reduce speed and increase the consumption of fuel. Simple, aristocratic minds that enjoy not the travel itself so much as the amount of travel and the speed and comfort in which it is made. We congratulated ourselves that our way of seeing Spain was a better one than theirs. A little further along you picked up a fat, stumpy candle that was new and in good order, and had doubtless been shaken out of the jolting donkey cart. You put it in your pack remarking that it might be useful—a remark that was made really to cover the childish pleasure of having found something. Useful?—Bunk!

The minor bends of this part of the road were superimposed on a grander bend that was leading us to the left, out of the long straight valley and around a big lobe or toe of a greater mass of bare hill that ran down to the Jalón, the mass of the Sierra de Vicort, which continues on the northern side of the river as the Sierra de la Virgen.

Far below us, on the gentler slopes, there were a few stone huts, isolated dwellings, to be seen in few places in Spain, a country in which life clusters nearly everywhere into villages. Above them, on a knoll not far below the road, a boy was bending over some task whose nature we could not distinguish, while a woman, his mother it seemed, sat nearby in an attitude of supervision, after the manner of parents who are overfond.

But the life down there, the scattered huts that were so different from the houses of Aluenda, so far from Aluenda; and this changing direction of the road, and the ampler, deeper valley beside us—it all meant that we had turned into the valley of the Jalón itself.

We were led down, on the outermost buttress of the bend, to a natural platform where there was a white caminero house, a place that jutted out and hung over the habitable troughs of land like a bastion. To the right our road looped itself into the narrow valley of Aluenda in a series of sloping hairpin bends in echelon, to emerge like a delicate thread that trailed along the far hillside opposite, up to the Puerto del Frasno. The English car ran smoothly up the last of the slope and disappeared through the puerto. To our left was a long climb across the flatter folds of the top of the sierra, up to the Puerto Cavera, where the road disappeared.

And in front of us, far below and far away, the Jalón twisted itself out from between the sierras to run gleaming among the mountains, gleaming down a long reach that bent and fell into the closing hills of the distance, the river disappearing into a locked secrecy of direction. How close it looked in that clear atmosphere! We could see the railway line down there, the villages—Paracuellos de la Ribera, Saviñán—and the outlines of farms. An inaccessible world of men, down and apart, held between walls.

Uphill we turned, south-westward, and made the long winding climb to the last of the "passes," the Puerto Cavera, a mere cut through the ridge of the sierra. And when we got there, it rained.

We found protection within the puerto itself, in a small shelter hollowed out of the steep face of the cutting like a little, rectangular cave, and lined with stonework. Once more we wondered what purpose these tiny roadside shelters might serve. Never did we find anything in them, and never did we find one big enough to accommodate two persons with comfort, nor even one person in any but a huddled, sitting posture. Nevertheless, they were all neatly and strongly built, and we always found them clean, in France as well as in Spain. What were they for? Tools? Explosives? Why not have asked a caminero?

The Puerto Cavera opened on to country that was rough but not mountainous. Walking down the long flank of the Sierra de Vicort with the telegraph line again beside us, we lost all sense of altitude, for the sierra, now a low mass rising behind us, was no higher on this side of the pass than the surrounding tops of the country.

Here were no plunging steeps, no troughs and hollows of the land, no cavernous distances opening at our very feet. All that world of inaccessible things far below, all that gazing down from high places, had passed out of existence, for here, the ground on which we stood was, or was leading us to, the shallow bottom of things. The existence of levels lower than those on which we could walk, the possibility of anything further down under the sky, was inconceivable.

The view ahead was rather confused for some distance, and the country was perceptibly poorer and drier than the zone of the sierras. Wild, uncultivated country, overgrown with tangled thickets in some places, and with tufted grass in others. Lean, sandy, abandoned to its own poor loneliness, and rather careless of its appearance. There were people on the road in front of us at first, going the same way as ourselves and taking short cuts at the bends. They disappeared, perhaps down some barely perceptible track, and we had the world to ourselves.

One big, lonely building stood by the road at a place that suggested no reason why a building should be there. It called itself a parador, a wayside inn. Several handsome girls were sitting at one of the windows doing something that we could define no more closely than to call it "textile work," and, on the wall below them, a crude scrawl of large phallic drawings in chalk, proclaimed more harshly, more nauseously than I have ever encountered it elsewhere, the contrast between women and sex as different kinds of men regard them. The healthy, fresh vitality of the girls made the direct, natural appeal of flesh to flesh; but the drawings, though grossly of the flesh, had nothing to do with flesh—they were the mind gone turbid and sodden. Did the girls know that they were there? They must have known.

Such drawings, a common defacement of walls and bill-boards in France, where they seem to associate themselves naturally with the handbills of advertising specialists in the cure of venereal disease, are rarely to be seen in Spain. On so lonely a building, inseparable from the picture of delightful girls at a window, their effect was one of shock.

Beyond the parador the landscape gradually resolved itself into the open definition of a broad valley flanked by rough hills. The hills themselves fell into habit, into rhythm, developed character, so that we began to call them "unfinished hills" because they "haven't their tops on," as you added. A flatness of top-curvature, a uniformity of top-level, that betrayed the landscape as one carved out of a surface that was formerly continuous and nearly flat. And the level of their tops was that of the great, undulating plateau of central Spain.

A straight valley on the left, that of the Rio Peregil, and a straight, uniform ridge beyond it, and a more important river, the Rio Jiloca, in another straight valley beyond the ridge; three parallel features, revealing the strength and persistence of that "grain" in the country that had been grooved into deep vales and high sierras in the zone between the "passes." Less deep, the grooving here; narrower, gentler, longer; and in each groove a road of importance, a line of easy movement strung with villages and towns—or so said the map. The ridge between these two rivers, a thing of brown-purple beauty and called el Campo or el Rato, gave a precise finish to a growing charm of landscape that was continually deepening its individuality of colour and composition; continually increasing its brightness, in the late afternoon.

So abruptly did we come upon the funnel of the gorge of the Jalón that it startled us, pulled us to the right to lean over a wall by the roadside and gaze down in fascination at the black water, the swallowing rocks. Even the near view over the edge of the road exposed an unexpected amphitheatre of intensively cultivated land, a bright, sharply civilised bowl, broken on the far side by the savage steepness of the river bank. At the bottom, in an impossibly difficult place at the edge of sweeping water, a small mill, or perhaps an electrical generating plant, carried civilisation to the portals of another world. How follow such a river? It swept from the calm reaches of a leafy, populous valley straight into a tortured labyrinth of sundered rock. Upstream the railway line plunged into a tunnel, rushed into darkness, beaten into the rock where the rock said else, "I forbid!" In the twisted neck of the gorge twisted rocks jutted, leaned, projected, rose in spines and pinnacles and crags and rugged walls, black-brown rock swallowing black, scaly water. And the water, disappearing, made the noise of supernatural things, the low, scraping, shuffling noise that sifts an even tone into the ears at night, from nowhere. Cold air struck our nostrils, drifting out in chill currents from the limpid shadows and hard clarity of a congealed creation where darkness alone was colour; whence no perfume was ever borne. How follow such a river? The near-most crag, a rough sentinel thrust up from the swirling water, commanding gorge and leafy reach, bore, in upward continuation of itself, a small castle. How follow such a river? And yet, the bristling way was barred for another, bolder age, by vigilance and force of arms! Castle Perilous, brittle, enduring—how long since the trumpet sounded there for sortie? Whose banner fell, and whose was raised? What echo was the last to die, before the echoes of the thundering train boomed a confusion louder than the drums? From across the water at the base of the castle crag the little mill gives forth a trustful silence. Twirling upward from the strand—the crag is wrapped—the turret burns—can you see them?—burns with invisible flames of peace.

The afternoon sun was warm on our backs. We turned to the road again and went downhill, went towards the lowland green of irrigated cultivation, through land that became pasture, then fallow, then hillside farm.

In a field of poor wheat to the left a black-robed figure moved and halted and then moved again with quiet purpose. A priest, out taking the air, and observing small birds through field-glasses. He, at least, would have understood our journey and us; would perhaps have liked to have gone with us the rest of the way. He gave us a pleasant greeting as we went by.

Then, to the right, and far across the flat, green floor of this upper valley of the Jalón, Calatayud, our first view of it, a brown city, huddled in the distance at the foot of a brown cliff, beneath an old fortress. It looked as if the living spread of green crops had pushed it, forced it to press itself close against the side of the valley.

Calatayud, the first of the upland towns! Larger than Balaguer, smaller than Lérida, it holds back the life of the upper Jalón like a dam at the head of the gorge. And its name—I hope for meaning in these names, but can find none: *Calata*yud, just above the gorge; *Calato*rao, just below it. And Calatayud is more than a dam of life at the gorge. It ties into coherence the scores of little towns and villages that are strung along the grooves—the rivers—of the "grain," hereabouts. It stands for more, even, than that. For it is where the way of the Jalón crosses the way from Valencia, far off on the coast to the south-east, up to Soria in old Castile in the north-west, a way of the "grain." Highroad and railway line come from the south-east, along the populous valley of the Jiloca, and the highroad continues on, to Soria, by the rambla or dry ravine of Ribota, which follows the line of "grain" on the north side of the Jalón. A place of importance, Calatayud.

But it hides. The lower down we went, the less did it seem that a city was there. But the green floor of the valley of the Jalón told of people in great numbers. There was a sharp contrast, as you said, between that "green floor where people swarm, and the open freedom of the bare hills, where they don't." There were a few houses, however, that were not in hiding, and one walled property on the left interested us on account of the number and variety of its fruit trees—pear, cherry, apricot, almond, walnut, and all bearing young, green fruit.

Below here the road became an avenue, and we must have crossed the Peregil, or its dry bed, but I do not remember it. We were at last on flat land, between trees; and the road, muddy and rutted by heavy traffic, was in such disrepair that we had to walk on the low bank at the side. Officers and their grooms were riding out from town, traffic and animation grew, and we crossed the railway line, the main line from Madrid to Zaragoza, to find ourselves not in the suburbs, but on the rich, irrigated flats, as far, in feeling, from the influence of a town as the green crops themselves. An aerial way passed overhead, from the railway station on the south, above the river, to the top of the yellow cliff beyond on the north. What mine or quarry or treatment works it might serve we were unable to guess.

Across the river a fine avenue took us at once in its arms. We were in Calatayud! To the right, a large, round construction that looked like an overgrown gasometer or an immense bandbox without a lid—the red-brick plaza de toros or bull-fighting arena, the first we had seen. Then, a battery of compressed air drills and gangs of men, and the paved road being torn into disorder for the better laying of a concrete surface. Not far beyond "the devastated zone" a row of tall hotels overlooked the boulevard from its north side. We studied them critically, selected the Hotel Pina, and walked in.

A good hotel of the "quiet" kind, and well appointed. From a clean but plainly furnished room on the fifth floor we looked out into the dense foliage of the trees of the boulevard, and listened to the rattle of the compressed air drills. We were in Calatayud.

Behind us, two small iron bedsteads, a tiled floor, hard chairs, a washstand. In front of us, the fullness of Spring, horse-chestnuts richly in bloom, the one beneath the window bearing spikes of pink blossom. It was the closest I had ever been to horse-chestnut blooms, almost close enough to touch them. Where had we last seen horse-chestnuts in bloom? At Montauban, twenty-two days ago! That meant that here, a hundred and eighty miles further down the meridian to the south, but seventeen hundred feet above the sea, Spring was about three weeks later than at Montauban.

We turned to our room, and to ablutions. You discovered that the electric light was out of order, so we called for assistance. A handsome and confident maid came up, and we tried to explain the difficulty, but she only smiled at us when we said that the light wouldn't work. She would show us. "Pero si, si! Mire Usted, señor! —Of course it works! Look!" And she stepped over to the switch to demonstrate the ways of electric light to two gentlemen, who, being foreign, were evidently unfamiliar with it. Click!—but no light. The girl was good-humoured, and she laughed at herself readily with us, assuring us, as she went out, that the matter would be attended to promptly. You gave a wry smile of doubt, and ostentatiously, triumphantly, you extracted the carriage candle from your pack and set it on the washstand. It is probably there yet. We hear so often that nothing is ever done at once in Spain, but before we went down from the room an electrician came up, and when we returned to go to bed we found that the light was working properly.

But where was Calatayud, the brown city? Trees and a boulevard and a row of hotels were not the city. So we went out before dinner to find it and to buy cigarettes. We found it concealed behind its green front along the river; found that the wide, shady boulevard is no more than a modern edge or border that carries the traffic of the main road to Madrid right past the little city, between its southern side and the river, without going into it at all.

And within Calatayud—how close together the houses stand! Packed into small space. How darkly shady are the narrow streets!

How far from leafy green, the cobbled pavements and the cold walls! How like is one street to another, one quarter of the town to another! How unadorned by painted sign or colour or bright window are the houses of business! How little any door invites! Walls, and a coldness of shaded stone.

Signs there were, however, of a stable prosperity; cafés that were very large, and one building through the plate glass windows of which we were able to glimpse heavy, comfortable furniture and fittings, red plush armchairs and lounges, massive tables and cabinets of brown, polished wood—the appearance and the atmosphere of an exclusive club.

We dined at the hotel in what, from its air of sociability, might be called a family dining room. At the table behind us a fat woman and two small children, and all the fuss of special arrangement that invades public rooms when small children are introduced—bibs, high chairs, crumbs on the floor, and a disorder of uncertainty. The waitress and the portly mother were, however, very patient, and there was a bowl of roses on that table.

Beside us, at a separate table, an Englishman gave his orders in slow, cautious Spanish with a strong British accent. We, at any rate, were more fluent in speech than that, and our pronunciation was better! For the second time that day, and again at the expense of someone whom we thought to be English, we indulged in self-congratulation. Why, I wondered, should Aragon attract English people? We noticed more of them there than in any other stage of the journey.

After dinner we went to one of the large cafés in the city and found it thronged with a friendly crowd of men and youths, all in lively conversation and drinking nothing but coffee. There was a general, polite acknowledgement of our entry, a barely perceptible nodding of heads, from all the tables near the door, and the place delighted us. A very large, lofty room, with light, unadorned walls, bare tables, and leather-cushioned seats—an angular, masculine room. It resounded with a brisk, athletic vitality of conversation, yet neither loudly nor with the rough, uneven pulsation that is common in crowds. A sustained animation that had the communicating quality, the influence, of a mental perfume given off by the assembly, filled the room, so that merely to be there was to be in a state of enjoyment, stimulated by something as real as the odour of flowers or the vapour of volatile liquids, and, like them, a thing of light pressure maintained in the surroundings. What were they doing, these men and youths? Talking, and drinking coffee—no more. What kind of people were they? Ordinary people, the majority of whom looked poor in their plain, worn, and even shabby suits of every day, some few without collars. Men from the offices, the shops, the factories, the farms. But a sense of equality bound them together, and they seemed intelligent, alert to life. There may not have been a person of ability among them, but neither was there a person of dull vitality. These men were brightly alive. We drank several coffees, enjoying that capacity of time to prolong the same thing through a wide interval on certain occasions—to "make it last." Everybody who saw us go out said good night.

Some of the streets, especially those near the boulevard, were crowded; people standing in groups, talking; people walking slowly up and down—boys and girls together; children, playing noisily. Our garb, and the sound of our English, drew many curious glances towards us, and at last the voice of the crowd spoke, or called, from behind us. "Quienes son Ustedes?—Who *are* you people?" It was a little girl of eight or nine, puzzled, friendly, openly curious; the unselfconscious human personality before it has lost the power to be natural. We had lost it. Our answer? A smile of acknowledgement—and we disappeared into the crowd.

The morning of May 6th, a Thursday, broke uncertainly. Would it rain? I felt, however, that it would move as rapidly as the brightest of days; felt that, in leaving Calatayud (which cost us only sixteen pesetas to the good Hotel Pina) we were free from all those delightful mental delays of transition and comparison that hold one to the edge of a new country, and hold time so rigidly to the present. We were launched now towards Madrid, with no more mountains to cross, nothing but the undulating plateau, the open country, ahead of us; no city to enter before Guadalajára; and we had money enough to take us all the way. We should feel, now, that we were moving rapidly, and time would pass quickly—too quickly.

But Calatayud, in the morning, still had things to show us. Brownness and greenness; and the signs of a hot dustiness ready to awaken on the first warm, dry day. The boulevard ran beside the river, and the river had called peaceful things into existence, flumes and a mill. Gentler industry than that of the large factory on the opposite side of the valley away across the fields near the railway. Passing through a brown stone gate and over a moat the boulevard became an avenue. Water-supply works. Then, the edge of the town. And a very curious edge indeed.

The cliff that enwraps the northern side of the city bends towards the river and was here close to it, and many poor dwellings had been hollowed, like caves, out of the rock itself. Tiers of them, with front walls, fragments of tiled roof that extended the natural cover, chimneys, and all the other attributes of houses, except that expression of space enclosed by matter, which belongs to builded things. In them, space had been extended, by removing matter. A cliff dwelling in a warm, dry country may be a comfortable abode, although a dark one, but what, we asked each other, could be the system of defining such property? Would "land" for cliff dwellings be sold by the perpendicular strip, or by the cubic yard? How far would the rights of ownership go, in the three dimensions?

Beyond the cliff dwellings the avenue became a tree-lined road, a highway, cool and pleasant as a shady reach of river. We had gone about a mile along it when we were stopped by two members of the Guardia civil who demanded our papers. Such investigation was so unusual in Spain that it had the effect of a jolt, but the guardias, two impassive fellows wearing black capes over their blue uniforms, and well mounted on white horses, were impersonal and efficient. We were foreign pedestrians. Foreign pedestrians must be stopped, to ascertain if their papers be in order. It is time enough to show the authority that is justified by suspicion if their papers are found not to be in order, but not before. Each glanced at one of our passports, at the date, the Spanish visa, then passed it to the other for verification, after which they handed them back to us. "Bueno!" We might proceed on our journey. Firm politeness of manner, despatch, and no inquisitive cross-examination. How different from the gendarmes! No sudden change of manner from sharp authority to ingratiating curiosity. We had not seen the guardias on horseback before, and their appearance was imposing. The black, shiny, turned-up hats, a little ridiculous when the men are on foot, achieved, with the long, black cloaks, an effect of martial dignity and their bearing accorded well with it.

Feeling that we were now "safe," so far as the Guardia civil was concerned, and not likely to be submitted to annoyance by it, we left these two men, and went on through Terrer, a village that I have completely forgotten. As with Pierefitte, I can picture nothing to convince myself that I have ever been to Terrer, but we passed through it that morning.

There must be significance in the occurrence of such gaps of memory. I have only these two for the whole journey, and our evidence shows that I must have forgotten these two places almost as soon as we left them. You also forgot them, but you have forgotten other places in addition to them, while I have not. In our moods of that day there was nothing to cause me to forget Terrer, and no other cause has ever suggested itself to me. Do you believethat Terrer was there, that morning? Might it not have stolen away, vanished?

When you read that you will smile, I imagine, at what you will call my inconsistencies. Criticism of this kind may run through your mind: "He pretends that to explain things is superfluous and impertinent, yet he is always seeking and offering explanations himself. He loves fine colour, yet praises the beauty of low Aragon because it is without colour. He says that Paul Morand fails to understand dry, sunny countries, but forgets that Paul Morand might turn the arrow against him, from green, gentle countries. He implies that railways are a false gauge of civilisation, but he ignores all that part of the discussion that would come from places that are without the benefit of railways. He deplores the disappearance of peasant costumes, yet behold how he has dressed himself—in disreputable, grey flannel trousers, a faded brown sweater that fits badly, a khaki shirt with the top button undone, and a shapeless cap on his head! He objects to people who travel in automobiles, but would gladly travel by aeroplane himself. He condemns the mechanical development of the age, yet he admires the fittings of bathrooms, becomes lyrical over the beauties of a tap at Séo, and finds poetry in electrical power-lines. Back in France he used to mourn the decline of the aristocracy, and an empty château was a tragedy to him, yet here, in Spain, he is ready to praise the intelligence of common, uninteresting people!"

Yes, brother! I am guilty of all these things, and of more like them, and I am prepared to maintain that they are not at all inconsistent; am prepared to assert my right to a *qualified* appreciation of all things on this earth, where nothing simple exists and few things are wholly good or bad—not even yourself. Approval and disapproval, unqualified, are absolute judgments, and absolute judgments are always at fault, unless they be made by the good Lord himself. I prefer to state mine with some degree of paradox, a valid method of expression, whose peculiar quality lies in the *seeming* contradiction of its terms. And so, much as I would like to know why I have forgotten Terrer, I find myself glad that there is no explanation for that lapse of memory.

But wait. Perhaps the cause lies buried in shame. For hundreds of miles through two great countries I had kept you honest, but somewhere near Terrer your impelling desire to commit a petty theft got the better of you and you broke from control. At a place where there was a wall beside the road the branches of a cherry tree hung temptation over the wall. The cherries were not ripe—they were in the condition that seems to compel boys to steal fruit. Sour fruit, bright, glossy, flesh-tinted. Just as you were going to seize them somebody, whom we had not seen, coughed. We continued to walk to Madrid, without the cherries, and the discovery that the person who coughed was neither a guardia nor the owner of the fruit, but was merely a person at work in a field on the far bank of the river, a person who could not possibly have seen us, and would have cared little had we stolen all the green fruit in the orchard, that discovery plunged you into an abyss of shame. You had failed, ignobly, and the cause, an innocent hind! Shame enough in that to make us forget Terrer, to make us wish never to have Terrer called again to mind.

About where this unmentionable village should have been, the road ceased to be an avenue, the valley became narrower, and the hills began to close in and change their character. Moister soils led cultivation right up to their summits, the strips and rectangles making a patchwork of great beauty, for the bare earth of what were probably vineyards had colour of a variety and richness that we had seen at no other place. "Rug-colours," you called them—slate-purple, puce, brown, deep red, and slate-green, and they mottled the lineally formal patchwork of furrowed tillage as if they had been dyed into a fabric. Tone and quality and texture that are to be found, not in pictures, but in old oriental rugs, which, after flowers and stained glass windows, are among the most richly coloured of all imaginable things. To the mottled richness of these coloured hills I responded intellectually—my taste appreciated a superlative thing; but to my emotions they made only a feeble appeal.

Colour had been in the world again for twenty-four hours—the valley of the Trasmón, and the winding, coloured afternoon of yesterday—and of colour, however fine, I was in no present need. Let my mind record it, for the uses of memory; by no means would I pass it by unnoticed; but at the time it had no power over my being. Do you believe me—Aragon, back there? Often, however, since that morning, I have sought comparison, and found, with excitement, these hills of the Jalón, near Ateca.

Very quickly this colour faded from the drier, opener hills as the valley widened towards Ateca. It seemed that the rains of the past eight days had not fallen here; had not been blown much further from the edge of the sierras than Terrer. They had certainly thinned and ceased before they could reach Ateca, which was a dry place.

But, though dry, it was no insignificant, forgettable village. Ateca was a small town with a front on the shallow little Manubles river which comes down from the north, as well as one along the Jalón. A place of dust, and a place that smelt of blacksmiths' forges and produce stores. But a busy enough place to be able to sell us a better assortment of things for lunch than we had had yesterday.

On the way downhill to what looked like the "shopping centre" a vicious mule close behind me tried to bite my shoulder, and so nearly succeeded that you, the witness, were startled into excitement, while I, the potential victim, walked calmly on. I believe that I asked the exasperating question "What's the matter?" as I responded by habit to your touch on the arm that warned me to get out of the way of something.

In a good ultramarinos store we were served with deliberation. You made the purchase of wine, cheese, and tomatoes, while a swearing old man plied me with affable questions to find out all about us. A most objectionable old person of immodestly adorned speech, and I blush now to think that I understood him so well. The women in the store did not blush at his flow of indecency, nor did he seem to be aware that he was being indecent. Where, when, had I acquired that latent part of my Spanish vocabulary? Not in Spain. That throws the blame on to the United States, the only other country in which I had met people who speak Spanish. No—I exonerate you. You are willing to listen to evil but you make a virtue of not repeating it. And what Spanish I had acquired before we went to Spain was learnt before I met you.

We went to the plaza to find a bakery. On asking directions of a group of men they responded by hailing a woman who was crossing the square. The bread-woman herself, with hot, new loaves in a large basket! A little trouble over pronunciation—you pronounced *pan* to rhyme with can, and were annoyed with the woman because she did not understand you. At your request I repeated the phrase and she understood at once, which made you annoyed with both her and me. That was merely a way of being annoyed with yourself. But we had perfectly fresh bread for lunch, and our humour was restored.

Another woman, or, to be more precise, a good-looking girl, crossed the square with a basket full of oranges. We hailed her too, but she did not stop. We followed her, right through a door and into a barn, only to find that the oranges were not for sale. She relieved our sense of disappointment by being delightful over the time it took her to explain, and she told us that there was a fruitshop around the corner. We went to it, and bought oranges, dried figs that had a perfumed flavour, and a canette of water for your still virtuous and most un-Spanish thirst.

We carried the lunch a mile out along the road to a place where we climbed down from the road and over a wall into a narrow strip of wheat beside the river. There were young poplars along the wall behind us in that intensely green, shady, and secluded place. A shaggy donkey, tethered among the saplings, was the only creature aware of our presence, and we had too much lunch. A drowsy place.

The land, and the near hills across the valley, were bare, with rock showing through the brown grass in places, and the day had become warm. The river at our feet was no more than a chain wide, and flowed brightly, quietly. Just beyond it was the railway line, which entered a tunnel a few hundred yards up the valley. Between us and the tunnel an ugly iron bridge, with a road-sign pointing to the ermita—hermitage of Nuestra Señora la Blanca, shown on the map as miles away to the south, over the hot hills. A train lumbered past, into the tunnel. In half an hour came another one, out of the tunnel. Carts came up and down the road, lifted themselves over the little shoulder of the hill up there behind us, and passed on. Everything moved slowly, heavily, to no sound of voices, and the steamy confinement of our little grove, the hot enclosure of the rocky, bare hills, the waiting donkey whom nobody came to tend, the lonely, white suggestion of the distant hermitage, all conspired to put the world to sleep. Things were walking in their sleep, aimlessly, through the warm, silent noonday. How long did we remain there? What eddy of hazy, drifting wakefulness aroused us at last from the narcotic torpor of inert pleasure and set us vividly on the road again with heads clear and muscles willingly active? What blind movement of will transformed our still, dreamy lethargy into eager activity?

I do not remember stirring from that place, but we were on the road again, winding narrowly through the dry valley in bright afternoon. The river, small now, seemed not so much to be in a valley as to be threading a way between low hills, a way so confined that the road crossed and recrossed the railway line, which passed here and there through a tunnel. But the hills began to rise, and to separate, giving ampler width and depth, to make room, at last, for Bubierca—"Bubierca of the leaning tower," as we called it.

A brown, swelling town, that spread over cushions, its main streets running between them, the tower, square and brown, rising from the top of the roundest of them. Why a stone tower on a hill in Bubierca should lean is a thing not be be explained. In Venice leaning towers are rational objects and to be expected. The more then do they delight when found in places where they are not expected, as here, in this little, unheard-of Spanish town on the plateau.

Bubierca had a square, not of the flat, familiar kind, but a square with a bulging surface, and in it stood a bright, blue automobile. We liked the brown tranquillity that seemed to be creased and folded over the surface of this town. There was nobody in the streets but the place was breathing, not in a sleepy, but in a meditative way, and it seemed wrong to pass through such a town without seeing what was underneath its appearance.

We found a café, and sat at a table by the window in a first-floor room, to drink coffee and cognac, and to talk with two pleasant women who were sewing. One was middle-aged, the other young, and they chatted naturally with us, as if we had known each other for a long time, and as if the making of good, enjoyable conversation out of nothing were the most effortless thing in the world. It is, if there be no tension between the persons, and we were at ease here. The walls of that room were decorated with panels of naturalistic plants, drawn and painted rather crudely and flatly, in cold tones; plants that are unknown to botany, algal plants, to be classified as submarine vegetables. Bubierca, we concluded, was not without imagination.

Into the dusty afternoon we followed the twisting valley further through the hills, which became lower and lower as we went. A few miles brought us to Alhama de Aragón, a town as big as Ateca, and primarily a place of business. Business is drawn by Ateca from the populated, lesser valleys to the north, and by Alhama from those to the south, of the Jalón. Alhama, a town of many streets and corners, on level ground; a town of green fronts and many shops, even to automobile repair shops, and of opulent properties behind walls. Handsome girls, sitting at an open, ground-floor window smiled a warm greeting to us—or was it an invitation?—as we passed by. But the feeling of life in places like Alhama is not intimate, so we continued to pass by, and went through the town. Quiet, mature women at Bubierca—pretty girls in a window at Alhama were, beside them, a light vanity.

The western end of Alhama de Aragón was given finish by grand constructions—on the right, the extensive buildings of a mineral bath, and on the left, a large hotel, connected with the baths by an overhead corridor that bridged the road. A spa. But this, evidently, was not "the season," for the premises were closed. In a dusty garden behind railings beyond the baths was a bright Moorish pavilion, pretty and elegant, built of red brick and gay tiles, a thing of quite recent construction, and astonishing in the beauty of its proportion. One expects a modern, imitative building of that kind to be a tawdry expression of bad taste executed in cheap, perishable materials. The pavilion showed, however, that a good imitation can still be made. Past it, the road became a dusty avenue of open trees, leading across open country. It was nearly five o'clock. Half-way between Alhama and the insignificant village of Contamina, which are scarcely two kilometres apart, we sat down to rest.

What had happened here? We felt that we had passed out of something, left something behind us, or that something had come gradually to its end, here. Open country spread away to the north, west, and south. Trees there were along the road, as far as Contamina. Trees there were over on the left by the river, rows of trees around green fields and a green meadow, and around white buildings in the midst of the green. A girl carried buckets across a yard from one building to another—a dairy, perhaps, and milking time. But here, at the dairy and at Contamina, were the last outposts of the trees. All beyond was bare, open country, naked and lean.

We had come to the end of leafage. From the sierras to the Jalón, and up the winding valley, trees, foliage, the green of rain and running water, had been shrinking slowly, continually, to a band, a narrow, twisted ribbon, and this was its end. All day the dryness of brown, grassy hills had been closing in on us, squeezing us up and up to the open surface. The valley had become less of a valley—a groove; then less of a groove, a mere scratch, until, here, Jalón was running in the open, across, and not through, the land.

We had climbed slowly up through diminishing vales, out and away from the populous grooves where water flows, out and up, to look, at last, over the dry, undulating hills that spread everywhere beyond them; out and up, on to the high surface of the undulating meseta. We were "on top."

(*b*) *The Open*

New forms, new colours, to the new land. We sit at our place of rest and observe them. Three oldish men going from Alhama to Contamina greet us in pleasant words as they pass by. We prolong our rest by two or three minutes—even pleasant company as far as Contamina is more than we wish to accept, on this quiet evening. The sun—shining with a cold, level brightness across the flat hills and shallow depressions. Cream, buff, and brick-red, the hills; almost bare of grass; dull, under the level sun; offering bright, granular surfaces to the light, and throwing back the harmony of weak, opaque, geranium hues. The colour is vivid with brightness—not with depth—as we look back to the south and south-east. The distant hills are flat on top, there; low, long mesas. Ahead of us, long rolls of land that stretch their arms from south and north to where we know the river is. They are called sierras—the Sierra de Cetina to north, and the Sierra del Solorio to south—but we have seen sierras, and these, to us, are a mere ground-swell of the plateau.

Contamina is not interesting, and we pass quickly through it. The road beyond there has no trees, and the openness is complete. A rolling openness that can conceal things. At the top of a ridge we turn an unexpected right angle to right, then another to left, and the road is displaced by a few hundred yards to the north.

The approaches to the bend are marked by signs, "Peligro!—Danger," placed there by the Obras Públicas, the Department of Public Works, which shares with the Automobile Club of Spain this task of ensuring the public safety. In France, we remembered, there are many more road-signs than in Spain, erected, most of them, by the powerful automobile interests, for the public safety—and for advertisement. But here, the signs were necessary; for soggy ground, low bushes, and the ridge, conceal the unexpected twist of the road.

Just beyond it a ditch or a small stream from the north turned the roadway into a ford. Luckily for us, an irrigation conduit of hollow logs ran along the edge of the neighbouring field and passed over the stream, like a bridge, to the field on the other side. We walked over it, balancing ourselves like tight-rope walkers, and regained the dry road, which ran over hills and hollows for monotonous miles.

Distance changes but slowly in such country, and but slightly, for the land is almost featureless. The gentler flanks of the hills and the shallow bottoms were under wheat here and there, and a slender system of irrigation seemed to prevail wherever it was possible to lead a thin ditch of water from one of the shallow, aimless little streams.

Many streams of small size are shown on the map, wandering over the plateau between flat hills, to the Jalón. Their characters and habits are revealed by the names their courses bear: *rio*, which evidently stands for "stream" in this part of the country; and *arroyo* for "rivulet"; *barranco*, "deep hollow"; *rambla*, "deep, sandy ravine"; *hoya*, "dale"; and *cañada*, "glen."

It is evident, from the distribution of these names, that not many of the streams flow all the year round, and that, away out among the mesas, far from the Jalón, their valleys are more deeply and narrowly cut into the hills. In spite of the uniform appearance of the outlying country, there is a greater gentleness along the Jalón than elsewhere, which draws the light weight of crops and life down to the line of the river.

Nothing, not even poverty, is intense here. But there is more cultivation, more life, along the river than out yonder, but so little more that it cannot be called a band that fades outward from the line of the river. There are lonely villages out among the hills, far apart, and some of them are not built up upon the ground, but are, most likely, hollowed out of the dry rock itself, like the cave dwellings at Calatayud—villages that do not betray their presence in the landscape.

At six o'clock we rested opposite Cetina, at a place where the road ran through a very large, new orchard. Cetina itself, at least two kilometres to the south and across the river, was tilted into full view by the long, broad slope on which it lay. A low, yellow town; and in its midst, a large church that bore the last and outermost of the domes of Aragon, the quiet Neptune of the family of domes, lonely in space, remote, silent, and lovely in its peace. It seemed to lie on the last ripple of an outspreading influence, poised and held by the faint, far attraction of a power centered in a system of life behind and away below us. It evoked, from the level hills, a faint perfume of low Aragon, this dome, and a tenuous mirage of that other land's beauty, as if low Aragon had risen into the cooler, dewy sky. (*Was* there a dome at Cetina, Max? And what'll I do if there wasn't?)

Over the ridge, past the orchard and Cetina, a road came down from the edge of Old Castile in the north. Beyond the junction level miles before us showed an hour or more of straight marching, and at the end, our goal, Ariza, with the bright western sky behind it.

One large building with a tower, and a dark town about it, held between long fingers of the land whose tips, almost in contact, left a gate between them, through their narrow barrier, for the river, the Jalón. The town appeared to be set in a narrow gap where the hills came together, and it held them like a lock.

In this low, extending land, the town had the grace of things that stand solitary on the open plains, or of ships alone on the horizontal sea. It drew the whole composition of the landscape to itself, darkly, a silhouette of line and mass uprising, where all other things were prone. And it drew some magic from the fallen sun—of intercepted light: of rays that spread wide-openly towards us far apart, overhead; that pulled the whole dimensions from the depth of sky, from the wide horizons, back and inward to behind itself, one-sidedly, as if, behind Ariza, no other world existed but the world of sky.

Straight approach, and the town growing as we move, drawn towards us in a magnification that spread the flanks of the level perspective of distance out too widely for the eyes. The far town slowly expanded into foreground. Cultivation, of wheat on the hills to right, of greener forage crops on irrigated flats to left, became more continuous, but was nowhere very green.

In one field the water was carried across a hollow in a flume of brick supported on low brick arches. Down the road men were leaving the fields, gathering into procession and moving in towards the town. We came to another brick flume that crossed a little river on our right like a miniature bridge. This one was close enough to examine, and we found it to be a thing of antiquity, of Moorish grace and elegance, and bent out of line by the slow movements of the soil. It carried these reticulated waters of irrigation centuries back into the past, or brought them out from a past of centuries, made them perennial, water flowing through the long continuity of life, and all the land seemed old. The quiet evening was like age reposing. And the hills, the open valley, the dark town, like the worn, durable garments of laborious ages of slow effort and unsweetened life.

Where we rested at seven o'clock flat hills from the north met the road. A man, a boy, a little girl, and a laden donkey passed by, going into town. In half an hour we overtook them, and we passed by groups of men with dogs who were resting on the roadside. Dusk now, and the town close. The near, right-hand hills exposed their buff, sandy rock, and were carved and excavated into dwellings like the cliff houses of Calatayud. These are the outskirts of Ariza, low mounds of rock honeycombed into compartments, the rock surface patched with squares of roof tiles, and it sprouted chimneys.

The main road flanks the northern side of the town itself, like an untidy, unfinished edge. At the two posadas we were refused lodgings, not impolitely, but as if lodging of guests were not part of the business of a posada. Indeed, at the second one a group of soldiers offered to guide us into the town, where, they said, we would find more than one comfortable fonda.

By this time we should have known that posadas do not lodge stray travellers unless the inducement be strong, for they are really of the character of simple taverns where one may drink, but, if one would sleep, he should go to a *casa de viajeros*, a *casa de huéspedes*, a *fonda*, or an *hotel*, which rank, I believe, in that order. A *fonda* is very respectable, but public. A *casa de huéspedes* or *de viajeros* is also respectable, but modest and private. An *hotel* is an expensive indulgence. Lowest in the scale is the *parador* or roadhouse; and the *venta*, which seems to have been a posting inn, is a thing of the past. These are not the meanings given in dictionaries, where a posada is said to be a lodging house, but they are the meanings which correspond with our experience along the main road "de Madrid en Francia," where, to ask a posada to lodge us always embarrassed the posada. So we thanked the soldiers, declined their offer, and went down into the town to look for a fonda.

It was a long way into the town, more than half a mile, and the town was big. Ariza, certainly, was not a village. The long street, cobbled and paved, took us past a large, restored church, and turned like a hook at the southern end as if there were no way right through the town.

Men were manœuvring several enormous barrels at the bend of the street, and as soon as we uttered the word fonda two small boys leapt from the group of lounging bystanders—casual barrel-observers—and wrapped us in eager, heated altercation. "No, señores, don't listen to him! Come with me!"—"No! don't go with him, señores! *I'll* show you the best fonda!" The opposing forces of these rival agents for different fondas were equal, and they kept us motionless for a few seconds, until, picking the livelier, brighter youngster as our guide, we were led to a building that we had passed already, a few doors back along the street.

The fonda was huge, hollow, cool, and the rotund old patrona was most affable. She refreshed us with wine and then took us to a large, lofty room that had two big windows overlooking the railway, the river, and the patchy fields to the south. Right below the windows were a courtyard and a garden flanked by a sunny balcony on which stood three or four tall, brown, earthen jars—the "backyard" of the fonda, and one of pleasant, airy privacy that made the house a comfortable habitation, and made us feel that our room had "a view." Ariza, it seemed, looked in, to shady stone and hard, cobbled streets; but it also looked out the opposite way, over little gardens, to sunny, open views.

The lofty room itself was eminently habitable, and substantially furnished with plain comfort. The two large, white-covered beds, the mantelpiece and mirror, the wash-stands and chairs, might have been British, so familiar were they as things.

And this lofty capaciousness of rooms and buildings that we had noticed first at Calatayud—it meant coolness. Everything in this open country seemed to speak of dry, hot Summer; of parched, burning days in July and August, and I remembered that in Adelaide in Australia, where January and February burn their character into the land, rooms are built—or used to be built—lofty and capacious. The doors and windows can be kept shut, and, with the blinds drawn (shades, you would say, Max), such rooms will stay cool, and the air in them will keep fresh, throughout the heat of the day.

Dinner was served at a long table in a room on the ground floor, but we did not dine with the other guests of the house. Not until after we had finished was the table prepared for them, when several men came in to a much later meal than ours, which, according to our idea, was late enough.

The patrona talked to us all the time, and, very unadvisedly, we asked some questions about the road of to-morrow. Of course, she said, the best way to Medina, as she called Medinaceli, was along the railway line. It was much quicker and shorter than the road. Her husband—"mi marido"—would explain it all to us when he came in. There were some tunnels to go through and it needed explanation. She explained her husband "in bedfellow terms," as you expressed it, by a most amusing gesture, bumping her fists together several times, knuckles up and forefingers extended side by side as she said, with twinkling eyes, "Mi marido, mi marido! Entienden?" Yes, those forefingers, pressed together side by side, would have made an Esquimo understand! Her husband, however, did not come in. But we were not to let that worry us. One of the other gentlemen would be walking to Medina in the morning, along the railway line, and would gladly have us join him, she was sure. At what time would he be leaving? Oh—at about six o'clock, she supposed. We thought that we could easily avoid that other gentleman, and we bade the patrona a non-committal good-night.

We came down at about nine o'clock the next morning, and apologised at once for having missed the other gentleman. Yes—he had gone, several hours ago. We paid our twelve pesetas, and very soon we too were gone, after warm expressions of goodwill.

We stopped for a moment to look at the restored church, a handsome, yellow building, classical in style, with proud inscriptions recording its restoration. It was modestly good, and pleasing in proportion. Instead of going inside, however, we bought cherries—the only bright and vivid things in Ariza—from a girl who was pushing a cherry-laden cart through the streets.

The main road looked dusty in the morning. We turned westward over a hill of smooth rock, then down, to cross a bridge over a wide, dry, sandy valley, beyond which were more dwellings hewn out of the yellow rock. Suburbs of Ariza. A boy on a bicycle, and another boy who was carrying several wide planks of timber, kept us company, scrutinising every detail of our appearance, listening in wonder to our English, but without breaking their silence to reply to us even when their separate commissions obliged them to leave us. By that time we were at the end of the excavated faubourg of poor dwellings that lines the road for a mile to the west of Ariza, and we passed, thence, over miles of dry, open land.

An hour brought us to a railway line that came down from the north-west, crossed the road, and joined the main line a few kilometres down the river. It was the line from Valladolid, as we learnt later. Not far beyond it came another road from Old Castile—routes leading to Ariza, and helping to make it the small capital of a wide, meagre district, the chief town on the western confines of Aragon.

We were a long way from the river here, on a great bend of the lines of movement that was gradually bearing us to face the west-south-west, in country so desolate that life seemed to have no rightful place in it.

The greater, then, was our astonishment to overtake a woman and a little girl, who came, perhaps, from Monreal de Ariza, a place across the river and hidden by this deceptive openness, two or three miles away to the east.

They exchanged greetings with us, and when we had gone about fifty yards past them the little girl opened conversation.

"Vienen Ustedes de lejos?—Have you come very far?" she called.

"Si. De muy lejos—Yes. From a long way off." But the little girl was not satisfied with that much, and she made a guess.

"Yo sé de donde vienen Ustedes. Vienen de Francia!—I know where you've come from; you've come from France!"

"Eso es. De Francia—That's right, from France," we replied in as friendly and convincing a tone as possible. And the little girl was satisfied. It was to be noticed, too, that her mother did not tell her to be quiet and stop talking to those strange, ugly men. She was allowed to talk.

But—life, and warm, feminine life, here! Nevertheless, they were moving towards places where life is possible. The river came nearer, bringing crops, wheat, up to the roadside, and the ditches, almost hidden by the over-arching grain, bore slow, earthy water through the fields. A softness of poor grass began to clothe the hills, and presently the road was lined with trees.

At noon we rested in the shade of the trees. Two men on bicycles approached slowly, from the direction of Ariza, talking distinctly in some language that we could not identify. They ignored our presence as they passed by, but we observed them closely. Fair, athletic, educated men, both bare-headed, clad in khaki drill, one in shorts, the other in trousers, the shirts of both open at the necks. On the rack of one bicycle was a leather attaché case; on the other, a neat bundle. University men on vacation, touring through Spain in a proper way, and evidently enjoying it. Northerners. The language was certainly Slavic—Czecs or Poles, we surmised, but not Russians. Bound for Medinaceli? Come from—Alhama de Aragon? Longer stages than ours by some twelve kilometres. But we would not exchange our way of seeing Spain for theirs.

The tree-lined road maintained its character for the next hour and betrayed nothing to show us that we passed, during that hour, from the province of Zaragoza, the state of Aragon, into the province of Soria, the state of Old Castile.

It brought us to a large, enclosed property in which stood a building of ambitious but bad architecture, a building that looked old. The stone pillars that supported the heavy, low balcony, were certainly old, but the wooden balustrades, the stucco ornamentation, the several coats of arms on the façade, looked pretentious. We thought it a bad attempt to achieve the appearance of a château or small palace.

A short branch of road led off past this curious building, and crossed the river into Santa Maria de Huerta, an open, sprawling village where there were gardens—huertas, enclosed by stone walls, and where a dusty dryness, a bright shimmering of the air, told of life that is watered without rain. At a shop near the bridge we bought wine, tomatos, cakes, and bread, and were directed to go down along the river and up a street to the right, to buy oranges. The street of oranges had been improved by a concrete footpath in which there was a large, covered hole opposite each house, opening, not over a cellar, but over a concealed waterway, and used for laundry work.

From this open village where every house had its ground and many houses stood apart, we carried our lunch back to the road and beyond Santa Maria de Huerta, to a long, high wall that ran along the roadside. A gap in the wall admitted us to a grassy slope that faced the river, a place shaded by a long row of old elms that ran parallel to the wall. Wall behind us. A green slope to the railway, the river, and beyond them, irrigated flats; and the village to the left. A most comfortable place for lunch, where we had only one disturbance. A man drove a yoke of oxen past us dragging a plough that lay on its side, down to low ground beside the river. A stubborn transit.

The Barcelona express ran smoothly by, hauling the formalities of civilisation through this emptiest, leanest part of Spain. It drew from you a comment of astonished approval—"Well! You can't say there's anything wrong with *that* train!"—uttered as if you expected all trains that were not American to be slow and primitive affairs. The next train, however, was more of the kind you seemed to expect; a long, lumbering succession of tiny coaches and trucks, all of different sizes and patterns, thoroughly nondescript and incorrigibly slow—the kind of train they call an *omnibus* in France.

Beyond the river a score of men opened the irrigation ditches and flooded a large, ploughed field. It was not flat, and they contrived to admit the water to sections of it so that it spread from higher ditches downward, across the contours, to banks on the lower sides that were just high enough to keep a section of the field under water. Slowly it spread, sideways, until the whole field had been covered and soaked and the higher parts were already exposed again. When the work was done the men walked slowly towards Santa Maria de Huerta. All other people who had been working in the fields were also returning to the village. It was about two o'clock—the hour of luncheon at Santa Maria de Huerta. We also left the field we were in, returned to the road, to march away from Santa Maria.

We heard singing there—from the fields. How well I remember your comment on the singing of Spain: "A., these are a singing people!"; yet how little I remember when and where we heard them singing in Spain! A boy on the railway station at Vitoria or Miranda de Ebro, walking up and down the platform at two o'clock in the morning, singing verse after verse of an old song—but this was when we were leaving Spain. At many, many places along the road we heard people singing, and one of them was Santa Maria.

And there too we saw reaping, a man reaping in a small patch of wheat, using a scythe with a light cradle fastened to the handle, which swept the sheaves to one side and laid them down in a neat row. I have seen that kind of scythe in Denmark since then, but it was the reaping that interested us here. How the seasons were passing, in these weeks of our journey! What changes, down the long road from Paris! And the young wheat here already tall enough to reap for fodder, while it was still Spring! Reaping—a prelude to Summer and harvest time!

Beyond Santa Maria there were no more trees. The land assumed again the dry, crumbling appearance it had had on the western size of Ariza, but here there was added a roughness and irregularity of surface, a semblance of the corrosion of layers, that was new.

The road kept far from the river, and mounted over slight elevations in many places. At one, at the elbow of a bend on the crest of a rise, were danger signs, and a monument to record the death of a party of motorists who had been wrecked there.

At another place a cliff about a hundred and fifty feet high ran beside the road, though not close to it, for more than a mile, with curious boundary beacons or small watch towers at regular intervals along its level brink, and, at one point, a steep chute for road metal, which ran from the top down to some sheds at the base.

Mid-afternoon saw us opposite the turnoff to Montengua, a village two miles away to the south-east, but hidden by the accidents and colour of the land. Close to where the branch road crossed the river stood a large, lonely house, with a little, furtive green, a few trees, about it. From it came the knocking, tripping noise of an hydraulic pump.

This whole, open view of spreading dullness, which had an elusive beauty of light, was given depth and fascination by a small castle, a ruin of low keep and square tower, that stood far off, perhaps five or six miles away to the east, on a low mesa so short that the building appeared to project over its ends. A thing of rude, remote antiquity, possibly of the tenth or eleventh century. So old that the ends, the sides of the mesa might conceivably have been eroded, eaten away by slumping and crumbling, to leave the stonework of the castle undermined, in the time that has elapsed since it was built. The influence of extreme heat and cold, and of dry, sweeping winds would be rapid here. Such rapidity of erosion may be improbable, but the appearance of projecting ends was hardly to be mistaken.

We tried to identify this little castle, and found on the map a village called Torrehermosa—Fair Tower—due east of Santa Maria de Huerta, and south of Monreal de Ariza, but were unable to discern any signs of a village at that point in the landscape itself, nor would the tower from which it may have taken its name be necessarily close to the village. The castle seemed actually to be further off than the village could have been, and was perhaps no little distance to the south of Torrehermosa. It stood so apart, so absolutely in the open, that it remained in view, like a ship at sea, until the nature of the country changed.

A castle that commanded the horizons. Watch towers on the brink of a long, commanding cliff. This, long ago, must have been a land of danger, a land of military importance, this far-reaching openness of gritty poverty where nothing in the world had fire, sparkle, brilliance, glitter, nor any quality of vividness, but where things might hide in the open, or might even move unseen.

Close though they were, we seldom saw the river or the railway line, and we saw none of the distant villages that are marked on the map. Cattle are driven across this country on wide beaten tracks, but we saw no cattle. Where the tracks crossed the road there were signs, "Ganada—Deviation for stock." But the land felt deserted.

This poor, faded country would be, evidently used to be, an admirable zone of separation, a strong, natural frontier. The western fringe of Aragon; the eastern fringe of Castile. It is a frontier even now, a limit set by barrenness. What more natural than for the power of Aragon to have pushed its way slowly up, over the edge of the meseta, and along the course of the upper Jalón, to this waste of debateable land? For Castile, expanding from the north and west, to have pushed its power outward to this margin of a habitable kingdom, here to meet Aragon, where the poor land itself stabilised their expansion by setting natural limits to it?

Miles gradually brought a change, as our day passed. The road came nearer to the river, and the hills seemed to become rounder, to be slowly mustering to give the Jalón protection that might be called a valley. At about four o'clock we came again to poor trees, and, mounting gently uphill, arrived, not at Arcos, which is just across the river, but in formless, dusty, modern extensions of Arcos.

We were thirsty and wanted beer. Uphill, to the right of the road, in the corner of what may some day be a square, we saw the sign "Cervecería—Saloon," and we changed our direction of march with such decision that no observer could have mistaken our goal. The observers were an old man and woman who were walking gently arm in arm taking an early paséo in the late afternoon. They stopped, turned, and watched us with an embarrassing amusement until we got right to the door of the saloon. This was no inquisitive scrutiny nor idle interest. The old people were laughing quietly at us as if there were something manifest in our movement, something which we certainly did not understand—as if we, new arrivals, were doing an expected thing that made us look ridiculous.

One glance inside the door of the saloon was enough to enlighten us. The "saloon" ran two businesses. Nine or ten men sat drinking and conversing familiarly and noisily. Two of them were guardias in uniform, of whom one was playing the only guitar we heard in Spain. The rest were workmen. Two ladies were serving them, familiarly but with a skill in the impartial distribution of favours, and the two ladies were prostitutes! Well, good beer is no less good when served by prostitutes, and who were we, in Arcos or elsewhere, to take exception to two ladies who were earning an honest living, albeit in an unfortunate manner? But I thought of what the old man outside must have said to his old wife: "Look at those two fellows! Just come to town, and making a bee line for the 'drum.' "

We sat down, and were rapidly appraised, and rapidly served with beer. The fat, fair girl from Madrid, who was dressed in pink, sat beside me and told me that Madrid was a beautiful, beautiful city, and that we would find it muy simpático—very congenial, which was good news. The younger, slim, dark one from Zaragoza, with the frizzy hair and hard eyes, who was dressed in black, sat beside you and told you—but what did she tell you? I know that she cast glances at a thin gold watch chain that ran from your belt to your trouser pocket.

It took the girls about one minute to understand, without being told, that beer marked the extent of our desires on that occasion, but their professional behaviour was faultless. A man put a coin into the automatic piano, the guardia with the guitar picked up the tune, and two men asked the girls to dance. They danced, and sat down beside us again to continue their talk afterwards.

Both of them looked healthy, energetic, and, if the afternoon represented normal business, their life at the saloon must have been one of hard work and strain. But they acted their expected parts well, and wished us good luck in quite a genuine way when we left. The immodesty of speech and behaviour that self-righteous people assume to be characteristic of all prostitutes on all occasions were completely absent. By what marks, then, did we appraise these girls? Why ask?

When back on the road we saw that Arcos is at the mouth of a real valley. Road, railway, and river form a tier of close curves between hills that become steep a very short distance above the town. We were looking down, to the line and the river.

On a flat piece of ground beside the line stood a roundhouse for locomotives, and the sheds of railway workshops. We understood the ladies back at the saloon now, understood them not lightly, but socially. Arcos employs workmen and labourers, a hundred or more, perhaps, many of whom must be young and single. Rough men in scores—what a life of exacting, stultifying complaisance to attract girls from Zaragoza and Madrid!

Past here the valley swallowed us in its narrow curves. We had left the lustreless, open country of long views behind us—the country where the Jalón falls gently down the miles, unconfined. Here was the beginning of a last segment, a steeper, intimate, winding corridor up to the source.

(c) *The Watershed*

Grey rocks, and a shallow, winding gorge with a green floor. It is very narrow, and imperceptibly becomes narrower, but there are trees, cultivation—of fruit trees—and hedges. Here and there, a house. The road, the railway, and the river quickly become a plait of three strands, crossing and recrossing, the road low down by the river, the railway a little higher, on embankments, in cuttings and passing through short tunnels at the sharper bends—a thread drawn a little tighter than the other two. The road is looser. It passes under short viaducts and over low bridges. The river, loosest of all, curves and winds across the narrow floor in a line more crinkled than that of the winding valley itself. The river is a strong, clear brook now, quietly flowing. The way is not steep nor difficult, but it is tortuous and hemmed in by cliffs in some places, by abrupt hills in all other places. The Jalón descends, the road and the line ascend, with gentle continuity that will raise us much, in the miles to go. For this is the steepest segment in the whole length of the river, from its source to the Ebro, steeper, even, than the descent through the gorge below Calatayud.

Somaén, the first village, stands on the swollen loop of the convex bank, in a large elbow of the valley. The road, however, is on the concave bank, and there are houses lining it on the side against the hills, houses that look through trees and across the river to the village, a brown cluster that had a cool seclusion when we saw it. As we walked past, there were old people sitting in the doorways, enjoying the last of the evening sunshine, and a boy who had a young rabbit under his coat walked a little way with us. Around the bend was a trim villa, as pretty a house as any in a modern garden-suburb, and French in style—the doctor's house. Another bend hid Somaén completely.

At five o'clock we rested by a small stone bridge. On the opposite bank was a house, above it a weir, and below it a little amphitheatre of cultivation where an old man was mowing with a scythe and two old women were sewing up sacks of fodder.

Above this point the valley became so narrow that there was only just room enough for the road and the railway, and the patches of cultivation became diminutive. Cliffs of ochreous red, yellow, and soft grey, screes of angular stones, and steep banks covered with stiff bushes—the natural, untamed scenery of lonely gorges—took the place of hedges and cultivated slopes.

The railway ran from tunnel to tunnel on an embankment fifty feet high, a shorter way than the road, a better way, perhaps. We climbed up to it, only to find ourselves constrained to walk uncomfortably on the sleepers, on the sharp, loose ballast, even on the rails themselves. We went through tunnels and cuttings, and across viaducts, for a couple of miles. We were glad that we had not gone with the other gentleman who set out for Medina at six o'clock this morning. The tunnels were driven through hard, grey limestone, and the embankments were made of the material so removed. There were many cavities lined with handsome crystals of calcite in the broken rock, but you were interested in them only because they were pretty. At times like that, you disappoint me.

Walking along the railway line was too uncomfortable to be continued, but to get down to the road again was not easy. A locomotive passed us at one point, the only traffic we encountered while we were on the line, and we felt the temptation to "hop a train," should one pass slowly enough—for there seemed no way by which we could easily get off this imprisoned railway line. At last, however, a cutting opened out on to a gentle slope and we came to the apeadero or siding, of Jubera, whence there was a short track that let us down to the road. No houses—no cultivation; and the little station building looked a most forsaken thing, in the bottom of this groove in the rocks.

Down—in the groove; shut in, for miles. And throughout those miles, as we walked along the road here, was the feeling that we were in a shallow gutter—that, if we climbed to the hilltops, we would be able to look across the miles of open, rolling surface; across a country different indeed from this rough exposure of what lay just under its surface.

A bend disclosed Jubera, a hamlet perched on a low shoulder above the road, and at least two miles from the siding that bore its name. As we went by, an old Argentino blundered excitedly down the earth bank to the road and stopped us. He wanted to talk English—would suffer intensely should we deny him this opportunity to talk English. But his English was of a kind not possible to understand, so we spoke in Spanish and then translated it into English. With him were two youths, one of them coloured and intelligent in appearance, and, as neither of them knew any English, it appeared to them that the old man had a fluent command of our tongue, and that satisfied him completely.

At the level crossing above Jubera there was a gatekeeper's house. The gates were open, and some children were looking down from a window at a calf that was tethered to the fence by a rope long enough to enable it to cross the railway line. Cattle in lonely parts of Australia are fond of railway lines. They lie down on them and gaze impatiently at approaching trains which may have to stop and politely request the cows to move off the line for a few moments. This little Castilian calf was evidently expecting a train, for he was standing on the middle of the track gazing up the line like a person waiting to complain about something. At a second gatehouse, further on, the gates were closed—a train was expected —but a man came out, let us through, and closed them again after us. The calf, it seemed, would not have long to wait.

The hills were beginning to lose their roughness and were getting greener, changing their character as we passed into a different kind of country, but what kind we could not yet tell, shut in as we were by the valley. We drank at a shallow place where the stream spread among round boulders and cobblestones, clear, cold water that had the chill of evening in it already. Thence we climbed rather steeply over and around a bend where the roadway was protected by a wall of stones. A gap in the wall, a collapse of stone outwards, suggested that a road accident had taken place there, and while we were searching for evidence of tragedy a goods train rumbled past, going down the valley. The calf would have less than ten minutes to wait, if he were still waiting.

And now, the road was climbing—up the hillside, away from the river. Quickly the valley expanded, and we were in the new kind of country whose presence we had felt. High, round hills, and deep, open hollows, curving smoothly, and covered with grass. La Solana, the Sunny Place, the edge of the clean, swelling hills that surround

Medinaceli. There were small flocks of sheep on the hillsides—inlets of clear distance between the hills—the shade of bright evening from the sun behind the hills—and hills, hills, hills, and the sweeping, even curve of the road.

For an hour we marched into the green, smooth relief of this rounded country. Medinaceli, perched on the top of a great, isolated mound, betrayed itself from far off, but did not show itself entire. Only the top of its high, yellow wall and the tower of its church could be seen above the lofty brow of the hill. A fortified town, enclosed by high stone walls, and the roads winding steeply around the green flanks to attain it.

Medinaceli, centre of a small hill country at the source of the Jalón. This, I remembered, is the country of el Cid Campeador, "the Leader surpassing in Valour," the half-legendary hero of Old Castile, whose chronicle I know only at second-hand, from Corneille, and from the scattered allusions that have crept into so many books.

Would we have to end the day with a long climb up into Medinaceli? We could see the arch of a gate through the wall, now. It was just showing above the tangent roundness of the hill. Did the two Slavs ride their bicycles up into Medinaceli? They must have got there hours ago—and the other gentleman who had walked. Would the fonda have room enough to accommodate five guests who presented themselves on the same evening, or would the fonda look with mistrust upon such a gathering?

Near the turnoff of the road which led in a whorl up to the town, we rested, and considered the matter. Quite close to us there was an old house with trees around it, an indication that shelter was not wholly confined within the walls of the town on the hill; and the map showed a railway station a mile further on, la Estación de Salinas de Medinaceli, which might represent something as imposing as its name. To be sure, the station looked, from the map, as if it were a gesture of compromise, for it stood half-way between Medinaceli itself to the west, and the village of Salinas de Medinaceli to the south-east, places that were nearly three miles apart. The station might be no more than a shed in the open, forsaken and isolated as the Apeadero de Jubera back down the valley. We decided, however, to reconnoitre the station before going up to the town. We felt under no obligation to enter Medinaceli if we could sleep at a place whither we would not have to climb.

It is curiously satisfying to be free to pass a town by, here and there; and to enter this town would not associate us any more deeply with the epic of the Cid than would our innocent passage through his country. Nor, if we entered the town, would we be likely to meet the present Duke of Medinaceli. In short, we were averse from climbing that hill, and would not do so could we avoid it. So we walked along the smooth road to the station, while the bells on the hilltop rang the quiet evening to sleep.

It was nearly dark when we got there, eight o'clock, a late arrival which was equalled for lateness only by our arrival at Ariza yesterday, also at eight o'clock; but these two days marked rather long stages of forty-three and forty-four kilometres. True, we had made late starts, and at only one other place throughout the journey did we arrive later—Vayrac, which we entered in black darkness at half-past eight, you limping painfully. But the satisfied, mild fatigue at the ends of these two days, the late starts and the long stages, express, to me, the long-drawn openness of most of the country through which those days led us. It seemed right to get to the station late, a little more tired than usual, and feeling that a walled town on a hill was a thing less important than the country in which it stood.

There were trees, and two or three plain buildings on corners, beside the station. We asked a man if there were such a thing as a fonda in the neighbourhood, and he pointed to a square, two-storied building and said it was not only a fonda, but a good fonda. Luck—or was it our desert? There was an ultramarinos in one corner of the ground floor, where an old man sat behind the counter on guard, apparently, over a very large, opened tin of sardines. The place, however, was comfortable. They gave us a corner room that was clean, and furnished cheaply but with unexpected good taste both in the arrangement of the simple furniture and in the choice of drapes and window hangings. And again, but not on account of the good taste, I was reminded of Australia.

For this was a typical Australian country hotel of the better kind. A two-story wooden building, one of a small and lonely group of buildings on corners by a railway siding. Trees, maturely shading the newness of growth, the temporary in appearance. Groceries. And within, upstairs, bare corridors with rooms on both sides; plain doors opposite each other, with low numbers on them. Two iron bedsteads, two wooden washstands with toilet "sets," and candles, given us because the electric light was out of order. Even the pincushions were there. Everything but the smell of beer, and the loud conversation of a bar. And the lonely night outside—a remoteness from other places.

Dinner, with all the guests at the same long table, was a meal distinguished by unusually good wine, and by conversation from which there was no escape. The other guests, four or five middle-aged men, were what I would call "terribly friendly," and, with no evident desire to be inquisitive about us, they felt, it seemed, under an obligation to entertain us. The talk was most discursive, little of it was interesting, but it was kept flowing with determination on their part. Each gentleman seemed to search his mind for information, and when his turn came, recited us a list of what people call "interesting facts," few of which had any relation to others. We learnt from them, however, that the cyclists who had passed us this morning were Poles, and that they had ridden up to Medinaceli for the night.

We freed ourselves from our entertainers by going into a long café that ran through the building from front to back. The night was cool among these hills that had shut us in darkness more quickly than the low spread of the surroundings of Ariza had done yesterday, and we were glad to sit close to a stove to drink our coffee. There were about a dozen men in the room, none of whom belonged to the group that had assembled for dinner, and we felt that we were under close observation. Without understanding why, I became embarrassed at the covert scrutiny, and could feel the ragged hole in the back of my sweater as if it were a place where a patch of skin had been torn from my back. Not since we left the Hotel Universo at Zaragoza, not for four days, had I been self-conscious about the shabbiness of our appearance, but the society of the café at la Estación de Salinas de Medinaceli made me so. This was Old Castile, an ancient and most cultured country where etiquette might well be instinctive among shepherds and railway booking clerks. I felt very uncomfortable, and announced that I was going to bed. What a long time you stood at your window looking at the stars that night!

Old Castile! The small, south-eastern corner of it, but a corner that had itself the individuality, the unity of character that makes a country. This was a small country here, a border country, the land of Medinaceli. It must have been of great importance in bygone days, when it was a frontier march of Old Castile, not against a friendly, New Castile, for New Castile was not then in existence, but against the hostile Moors and the power of Toledo, and a veritable pivot in the security of Christian Spain. A land heroic, a land of fortresses, castles, towers, and valorously held to keep the source of the Jalón, the passage of the easy way from the Jalón to the Henares, in the hands of Old Castile. Fitting, then, that the epic of the Cid should have sprung from this land of Medinaceli.

We had come up, right into the middle of it, through a burrow, so to speak, through the winding valley, to discover it a real country. Bald, round hills and smooth hollows, too bold of relief and contour to be gentle; grass, and a few trees that were densely green; sheep and quietness; a lonely, cool tranquillity; and a thin radiance over it all. How the world of little countries has settled into peace!

The hills looked cold as we walked up the empty, green valley the next morning, and the meadows beside the brook Jalón were marshy. Five kilometres south of the station we crossed the river and the railway line, and the road bent slightly to follow a tributary brook up a narrowing meadow. The young Jalón and the railway line swung away to the right, held in an open, curving trough that brought the river from its source, close behind, west of, Medinaceli, and the railway from its tunnel out of New Castile.

Looking back, we could see the town on its cold, green mound, enclosed by a simple, yellow circlet of high wall. In this clarity of morning, a water colour landscape of simple, broad washes—line and bare surface and planes deeply receding; candid hills, and heavy freedom, pure in the absence of all detailed things. One sketch could be a sketch of all that country.

From the little mill near the crossing we did not follow the tributary brook very far. The road left its valley and swung into steeper hollows, the more easily to climb over the saddle of the divide. Esteras de Medina, and Benamira, villages of the brook, must have been close over the left-hand hill, and beyond them, four miles to the east, the map showed a castle, the Castillo de Villaseca, but the round hills hid them all.

Smoothly the road climbed, through hollows, around flanks, taking us past a field on the left that was enclosed by an unbroken stone wall through which no gate nor other entrance gave access to the field; past a party of linesmen; past a gang of camineros; then up, gently, and around a bulging hill that seemed very high when we looked back and down into the hollows; then, gently still, into a grassy col whence no stream took its way—a saddle between the hills; a low place in the ridge of hills. This was the divide.

Quietly we had come to it, knowing it to be there, and gently, with insistent gentleness, the road had brought us there. And, as the road had mounted, slowly, so our excitement began to mount now. It wanted fifteen minutes to noon. We would rest here. Rest—and drink! For right in the neck of the col was a fountain, a plain, stone trough over a high-level spring. The water was as fresh as the air, keen on the palate, sharp on the edge of our excitement. Without resting, we leaned over the trough and washed the canettes thoroughly, talking with more and more animation, shaking the cold water in the bottles, pouring it out to fill them again, our hands wet, and the talk focussing rapidly down to the meaning of this place that we had approached so calmly.

"Do you mean to say this is really the divide—the watershed?"

"It is."

"Then we'll see no more of the Jalón!"

"The Jalón? All the time we've been in Spain we've been in the basin of the Ebro."

"And we pass out of it here?"

"Yes—into the basin of the Tagus."

"What?"

"Yes—the Tagus! Finish, the Ebro! Everything south of here flows to the Tagus."

"Tagus—Toledo—Lisbon!"

"Henares—Alcalá—Madrid! And there's more to it than that. We're right on the boundary between Old and New Castile."

Five miles north-west of us the railway passed under this same line of crest, through a mile of tunnel that pierces the divide—the so-called Sierra Ministra—between the Jalón and the Henares, and links the two Castiles. At noon we walked through the col, left Old Castile, the province of Soria, and entered the province of Guadalajára, New Castile—entered, indeed, the last grand phase of our journey.

But we did not pass at once out of the land of Medinaceli, the land of the Cid. Frontiers and watersheds are sharp limits. But some countries do not end abruptly. They fade.

XXVII

ALL OBJECTIVES GAINED

> "For 'twas with Men as with Countrys, on rude neglected Grounds Snows lay very long, but where the fruitful Earth was improv'd by Culture, they presently melt off, and hardly leave a Print behind: Thus unfashioned Minds can't discharge their Passions suddenly, but where Souls are inrich'd with instruction, they but appear and Vanish."
>
> *Burnaby's Petronius.*

(*a*) *Uplands*

So many times, in seven weeks, we had passed into a new country, and here, for the last time, we were to

pass
In like set order,

but

not as Midas did,
To wash his gold off into Tagus' stream,

nor even intending to go so far as

The banks o'er which gold-bearing Tagus flows,

though we did ultimately attain them after our journey was finished. But, on passing into New Castile we came very soon under the influence of the continuity and increasing intensity of life, civilisation, modernity. They had done something to the land, brought it into subjection, tamed it slightly so that, however lonely the place where we found ourselves, we felt that to north, south, east, west, the whole country was inhabited and that no place in it was remote. It was not that civilisation and modernity had been absent from the country behind us, nor that antiquity had been effaced from New Castile. But, Ariza, Medinaceli, they felt very close to ages that have been deeply buried under the modern civilisation of the world, while this uppermost layer of time became heavier, more continuous, as we advanced into New Castile.

We found ourselves under this influence during the first hour in the new country. The round hills were less and less green as we went south from the col, their grass drier, tougher; and when a man who was driving a donkey along the road in front of us turned on to a small path that led, evidently, to Garbajosa, a village hidden from view by the intervening hills, he seemed to have taken the lean freshness of the land of Medinaceli with him.

The open smoothness of grassy hills remained with us, as if the colour had dried to dullness and to a deeper hue, toned with brown; but form became broader, mass heavier and less and less round, so that relief, less accentuated, gradually lost its place as a dominant feature. Hills rose and fell under us, and were no less high than those behind, for the divide, though a line of crest that parts the waters, is not a line of culminating height.

Going down a long slope, after the man with the donkey had turned aside, we came to another fountain, a stone trough shaded by a group of old trees, and evidently the site of a spring. The trough—simple, yet pleasing enough to be called a work of art, classical in style, and marked, if I remember rightly, with the date 1810—with its trees and water made, together, one thing of maturity, a *place* that had unity, had meaning in life because it had been developed by life itself. You remarked that water was evidently honoured in New Castile, but, although we had seen nothing elsewhere that resembled these two fountains of this morning, fountains—*fuentes*, are nearly as numerous on the map of Spain as are *Brunnen* on that of Switzerland or Germany.

Looking south from the fountain we could see, on the left, the long line of a first-class road coming from the east, from Molina (and ultimately from Barcelona), the first important road to join our road in open country for perhaps the last hundred miles.

We turned nearly west at the junction, and within fifteen minutes were in Alcolea del Pinar, a large village on an open hillside, and a place which at once clarified the meaning of this new influence we had felt on entering New Castile.

For in Alcolea del Pinar there were signs advertising motor spirit, there was a garage, there was a good second-class road leading off to the south-east, and another to the north-west. Roads—they were on the map! Traffic. The infiltration of modern life into the far country. Alcolea, though quiet in the bright sunshine of noon on an open place, was not countrified; it was sophisticated—a village where, for the first time in Spain, we might possibly have lunch in a restaurant instead of buying it at poorly stocked little shops and eating it by the roadside.

We asked a group of men who were sunning themselves, if there were a restaurant in the village. Yes; back and on the right; that house nearly at the end of the row. This little town, four and a half days' march from Madrid, was rich with the gifts of civilisation, and poor beyond measure in external beauty, individuality, charm, native feeling. In some ways it made me think of Alcarráz, Peñalba, places where life has little colour. This place, however, was "up-to-date," and seemed proud of it.

They were Spring-cleaning at the restaurant. The entrance led us into a large room with an earth floor, a kind of stable-vestibule of the house, where we were asked to sit and wait during the preparation of the meal. The room was full of furniture from other rooms, piled there temporarily, arm chairs, benches, tables, cabinets, rolls of mats, window hangings, and two or three rocking chairs, the last a kind of chair we had not seen in Spain before. The patrón looked upon us and everything else calmly, like a man who believes that domestic affairs are not the proper concern of a man, and he seemed content to keep out of the way of wifely bustle and household disorder. Calm as himself, a young woman sat in one of the chairs, as if it were no part of her life to assist in the operations that were taking place. We thought that she must be a daughter of the house whose business it was to be a young lady. The patrona and another young woman who was probably what you call a "hired girl" in America, were out of breath from struggling with everything. Pails of water, scrubbing brushes, heavy, wet cloths, brooms, and dusters were borne to and fro, like weapons and ammunition for waves of assault against the enemy, dirt—or imaginary dirt, a mental conception of housewives whose unsatisfied energy demands continual and aggressive release and finds it satisfactorily in the unremitting attack on imaginary dirt.

We sat waiting for a long time, and the young lady did not talk to us. At length we were ushered through a room where we trampled across a wet, spotless floor, cleaned, as a last achievement before preparing our lunch, by the hired girl. They led us thence up a scrubbed staircase and into a room of most irregular shape on the first floor, the one room in the house, it seemed, that was not included in the programme of Spring cleaning. It was already clean, in spite of the fact that it could not have been "turned out" within recent weeks.

One full pig-skin of wine hung on the wall, pathetically distended into the caricature of a pig, and comically rigid like a thing blown out with air. Another, empty skin hung pathetically limp beside it. They expressed what might well be the philosophical summary of the life of pigs as all discerning pigs might themselves express it: "See what it amounts to, being a pig! They fatten us, and we die squealing, after a life that was not life; and the very relics of our existence are the immortal jeer at absurdity! Don't be a pig—be a giraffe and die in secret, but don't be a pig if you can help it, or all that they'll remember about you will be that you were ridiculous."

The pig-skins hung against the wall; the top of the table at which we sat was hinged by one end to the wall so that it could be folded up; and the wall, the walls, were not straight. Curved and leaning surfaces, unnecessary angles, shape that was not shape; the plan of the ceiling, the floor, not even an approach to the rectangle! Did I say that Alcolea had no native feeling? There was a pungent, leathery odour here, but no intimation of Alcolea itself came, through the high window, into that bright primitive room. There came, instead, an excellent Spanish lunch, served by the maid-of-all-work who fed the family in the next room at the same time as she waited on us; and there came with the lunch a bottle of the best ordinary wine—vino tinto, that we were to drink in Spain. That wine suffused the world with a brighter-than-noonday radiance, and made of Alcolea del Pinar a place of great significance in our journey.

It was appropriate that it should be so. Like Fraga, it marked a limit, the opposite limit, of height. For this garish village on the open hillside was the place where the road brought us higher above sea level than anywhere else in Spain after the Pyrenees. Alcolea is three thousand six hundred feet above the level of the sea, and it was our duty to make it memorable. We did so.

For, in that hour of luncheon, your conversion to a thorough belief in the excellence of wine was accomplished and made secure. No more would the curious Latin people wonder why two apparently healthy men should ask for milk, for water, for lemonade. No more would I have to explain to them, to your intense annoyance whenever I did so, the reasons for the extraordinary request, in order to get you the milk or water or lemonade. No more should I have to endure your self-righteous look of unvoiced rebuke when I drank with joy the traditional beverage of the most cultured and songful nations of the West. No.

For, from that hour, you began to develop, and with astounding rapidity, a discriminating taste in wines; began to discover new pleasures of the nostrils, the palate—yes, of the eyes themselves; until, at our last meal together before you sailed from le Havre, you were able to make a fine gesture of natural spontaneity by ordering a bottle of Chambertin. True, it was the only Chambertin you had ever tasted, but your exclamation, "Slaves! Bring me *more* of that!" showed that you knew and understood. And I knew, then, that you were returning as an Ambassador of Liberal Refinement to the censorious Barbarians of the New World.

Of course, your community at home would say—must have said, unless you behaved with evasive slyness—that this was all the Devil's work. But part of your community at home has yet to learn that there is as much of God in the Devil as there is of the Devil in their vision of Jehovah, whom they seem to have endowed with some most ungodly qualities.

But that wine of Alcolea was powerful. We drank all they brought us, that being expected of us, and after lunch were able to count the five and a half pesetas we owed them quite correctly. We were even able to walk through the village and out by the right road without drawing unwelcome attention to ourselves. But the further we went the less necessary did it seem that we ever get to Madrid.

By the time we had gone a mile we agreed that Madrid was of no importance—that London, Paris, and New York were of no importance—that the place where we should arrive this evening was of the least importance of all. So we turned aside from the road, and carefully chose a place among low bushes on the flat hillside, a place that was exactly like all other places for half a mile around us, and we sat there, on the gravelly soil, to talk about things that were, or might be, important.

We were in the condition that people call "fuddled," but I believe that we did sit, and did talk, for a little while. Alcolea del

Pinar was in full view, over there on the long flank of its hillside. We could see the road that led out to the north-west, and our own road, along which a few people passed, and a few vehicles. But the afternoon was bright, the bare, pebbly ground was warm, and the sun had softened the pebbles. Everything was comfortable and nothing was important. I lay down, with my head on my pack. You did likewise.

My mind revolved slowly, easily, of its own accord, like a big Ferris wheel with all sorts of uncommon things hanging like little cars from the circumference and being hoisted up, over, and let down, only to come up again, or to seem to come up again, but the things that came up were not the ones that had gone down. Somewhere below the old cars were lifted off and different ones were slung on to the wheel instead of them. ". . . bewitched bottle of milk—no! ink—what happens, put ink in milk bottle?—milk in ink bottle?—wash well—three times a day before retiring—gargle—clergyman's sore throat—housemaid's knee—baker's itch—king's evil—painter's colic—printer's devil—kindred spirit—yes, over there, drunk!—hillside in Spain—Castile soap—wash fiddler's bitch—drank wine—wine—Gertrude Stein—human planchette!—Pennsylvania—Pencilvania?—*Stein*—should not hold wine—stomach's sake—stomachs ache—drunk as raging mocker drinking strong wine—no! a mocker . . is drinking . . . raging strong . . wine!—why! that was in Paris! . . ."

At once I was filled with a brisker intelligence. Back in Paris—in the courtyard cottage! With what vertiginous variety we used to twist sentences like that of the strong drink that is raging! We used to push to the extremes of absurdity that ill-used wisdom and easy, traditional philosophy which comes so often to the lips of moralists; the phrases and proverbs whose ready acceptance has deadened the thought of shallow rectitude for centuries! We turned it into whimsical nonsense. But was it nonsense? Rather, I think, it was a sign of understanding, for how often some twisted phrase became the subtlest means of communicating a mood, a change of mood, or a change of shade within a mood! These topsy-turvy transpositions could inflate, solidify, distil, clarify, crystallise; give ærial buoyancy, meteoric speed, lightning instantaneity; they used to drop like stones, leap and flash like fish, glint like the momentary light on flat, polished things; they set wheels a-spinning, jammed the helm hard over, touched the snow to start an avalanche, were the springboard, the pistol shot of a foot-race, and the reins to bolting horses. They were the crash of deliberate wreck, gravitational shock, explosion. Always, they were points of accord, of simultaneous personal eclipse when we turned the whole world for a moment upside down, or made it ethereally still as with a touchstone. Therefore, they were not nonsense, which is to say, there is no madness but insanity itself, and no intoxication that is not a springing of the soul, and a plunge, at once, into all the colours and odours and sounds and forms of an elastic universe.

Alcolea del Pinar, highest point of the road in Spain, where at last you learnt to understand wine! We stayed on the hillside for much more than an hour—indeed, I am inclined to think that we slept while there—until, at about four o'clock, we remembered that we had a long way yet to go and that it *was* important. We put Alcolea behind us, and followed the road somewhat slowly over the scrubby hills for the next four miles, until we came to Saúca, where it was necessary to have coffee.

Saúca was a poor, grey village of small, stone houses with little yards enclosed by stone walls, between open, stony hills at a place where a road from the north joined the main road. The doors of many of the houses were in two sections, an upper and a lower, which opened or could be bolted independently.

We leaned over the bolted lower half of the door of a tiny shop to consult a woman inside who was sewing. Would the señora serve us with coffee? Yes, if we had no objection to waiting while it was in preparation, she would do so. We waited, in a dark little box of a room, while you ate some dry cakes and munched all the raisins that were left in stock, about a handful, the only edible things in the shop that were in keeping with the idea of afternoon tea.

As at so many places in France we looked at this establishment of slender business and wondered could it possibly pay—to serve us with coffee that had to be made specially for us? But when the coffee was brought in, the señora charged us two pesetas and ten centimos for it and the couple of cakes and the handful of raisins, explaining as if to justify the price, "Aquí es terreno pobre—It's poor land here."

And poor land it was. It resembled the more sterile parts of Lot, our familiar standard of reference for poverty of soil. As we followed the road over a switchback of rocky hills to the south-west of Saúca we saw little pasture, a very little, poor grain, and only a few small flocks of sheep.

Here and there, on the stoniest hillsides, were scattered groups of stone huts, hard for the eyes to distinguish from the desolate, blue-grey rock of the hillside itself. Oblong structures, the long sides leaning towards each other and bending roundly over to form the flatly-arched roof; a low door in the middle of each front and a square aperture or window in the middle of each half-front; simple uniformity of size and pattern, each house a type, and an expression that has evolved from hard land so high above the sea that it can

. . . tap the upper sky and draw a flow
Of frosty night air on the vale below
Down from the stars to freeze the dew as starry,

and grow poor grass enough to support a few sheep, a few men. Altitude—grass—Castile! This same land, were it lower, would be desert.

But in Castile there are many kinds of soil, if, in this part, there be but one, deeply-rolling kind of hill. We came again to low bushes like those to the south of Alcolea del Pinar, and we crossed one empty valley that was under cultivation, or where, at least, the ground was ploughed but unsown. Then came open moorland, with short grass on the hills and fair soil in the bottoms; and, where the road swung out and back in a great bend to the right, we cut across a ploughed field to shorten the distance.

Then, between two hills, and the road descending, and a widely open vale across the way. Green valley falling gently to the north; green shallows reaching far between south-eastern hills; the moulded undulations of smooth grassland; villages—la Torresaviñán in a hollow to the left beside us, tiny and brown, a mere hamlet; and Torremocha del Campo down on the flat bottom and on the road, ahead of us, a mile and a half away. This then was the campo, this long, broad hollow that ran from the south-east to the north-west between smooth, grassy hills, its floor green with irrigated crops of grain, its bounding hills the pasture of small flocks of sheep—four, five, six flocks. We counted them, stippled patches on the hillsides, far apart, with perhaps a hundred and fifty sheep in each flock. El campo—the spread of easy, habitable *country*. And dominated by a brown castle that rose from a hill in the very middle of this campo, four miles away to the south-east! A small castle with a square, flat-topped tower, like Torrehermosa of yesterday. But this was Torre*mocha* del Campo, the lopped, the cut-off, "the Stumpy Tower in the Open."

We walked down to the flat bottom and across a brook towards the village, discussing a change of plans. Our schedule would have us at Algora, five kilometres beyond Torremocha, to-night, but we had agreed, under the bushes at Alcolea, that our destination of to-night was not very important. Besides, Algora was represented on the map by a small circle, a tiny place, and, were it like Saúca, there would be no fonda there. Torremocha, on the other hand, was represented by irregular, black patches along the road, a modestly considerable place, as we could already see, and behold, it had a church! (But, I thought, what made it the most desirable place in which to tarry was the castle, the tower out yonder, where we could go in the long evening before dinner). So, if there were a fonda in Torremocha, we would go no further.

Came the priest, out along the road, missal in hand, reading as he strolled. Ask him about the fonda. But the priest, as we approached, looked at us with unchristian doubt, a most unpleasant priest. *Don't* ask him—don't even greet him! His reply will be a stare. And it was as we supposed, oh priests of Spain!, where "the ruminant is preferable, surely, to the priest."

We entered the village, a kilometre of low, plastered fronts on either side of the road, and the likelihood of there being a fonda in such a place seemed not great. We were directed, however, to go to the far end of the village where a group of people in the last house but one laughed unkindly at us. Standing apart in the fields beyond the village we found a closed and deserted posada. Back, then, to the last house but one, where a woman who had laughed at us before said, kindly enough, that we might stay there for the night if we were prepared to pay!

Mutual confidence grew rapidly as we made arrangements with the man and woman. The house was a small one of two storeys, the front of the lower floor being taken up by a deep barn or stable with an earth floor, like the "vestibule" of the restaurant at Alcolea, on one side, and by a porch and kitchen on the other. We held the discussion in the stable, and when we were all agreed they took us up by stairs that led from the porch, to a narrow alcove that contained a bed, a cot, and a chest of drawers. This, they said, was our room.

A window gave on to the fields beside the house, but the room had no door at the head of the stairs, and no door to separate it from another, family bedroom over the porch. The patrón assured us that nothing better could be found in the village, and then withdrew. He had, of course, asked us a few questions, and we had told him "es un sporto." That brought the information that the Polish cyclists had not stopped at Medinaceli but had come this way last night. We looked at the cot, the bed, then at each other. Who would take the short, narrow cot? Could either of those burly Poles have slept comfortably in that cot last night? No. If they stayed here, and had any sense, they must have shared the bed, which itself was not made for two people of their size. And so too would we—we were both slim.

We took off our packs, washed, combed our hair, and sat down to rest. Then, released from all the strain of exertion and no longer held by the interest of the road, I found with astonishment that my head felt heavy, and knew, from experience, that, were I to relax into idleness, I would presently develop an intolerable headache. I had been immune from such indisposition throughout the journey so far, and could not understand, when my health and vigour were so splendid as they had become in these seven weeks, why a disorder of chronic ill-health should overtake me here. We discussed it, without a single reference to the real cause, which we had both forgotten—the wine of Alcolea—and you suggested that I should lie down and sleep, if possible, while you would walk out to the castle.

Now, the castle was the thing that had induced us to stay in Torremocha, but, as on other occasions, we had talked of every reason for the change of plan but the real one. Neither of us had admitted to the other that the castle was a strong, irresistible attraction, and you, urging me to rest and sleep, had referred to it in casual tones—would have had me believe that a walk to the castle was a rather tiresome way of amusing yourself while alone for an hour or two. No! A heavy head was not going to deter me from exploring an ancient Spanish castle! We admitted, "owned up" then, that we both wanted ardently to go there, and we set out for the hill as eagerly as two schoolboys who hope to discover skeletons in a deep dungeon. But before we left the house we told the patrón where we were going, and he advised us to be back before dark, as we might easily get lost on the campo. The eternal father!

Out, and over the fields, by tracks through the wheat or straight across the ploughed ground, crossing many ditches, that were unexpectedly numerous and unexpectedly deep, hidden from view, as they were, by the brush-fine, soft-springing bristle-growth of grain. Much water here, slow seepage from the hills, and moisture of low mist-pools of the night. We came to the brook, which was unexpectedly wide, and lightly we jumped across, on finding a narrow place. What easy, free lightness of movement, this walking without the packs! What novel intimacy with crops and soil, this rough traverse of the muddy and stony fields, with no road beneath our feet.

It seemed to me that the road, the far-out, country road of loneliest places, had always held our feet as the rails hold a train, the channel holds a brook, or like a magnet holding the bar—holding *us* to one narrow line of movement whence our eyes might gaze at near or distant things and see appearance but no more. How often we had looked across broad fields and valley floors in wheat, to see the furrowed spread of earth and the expanse of grain! But when had we, before to-day, seen more, found more, believed there could be more, in such a place as this?

Low fences and deep furrows bounding the fields; tracks that were wide for mule and cart, and narrow, winding tracks for men alone; the winding, narrow brook, with fords and crossing places here and there; the jointed, open threadwork of the ditches through it all, with sluice gates and control too intricate to follow—which way does it flow? Such a map of detail might be drawn to crowd with lines this represented place, yet we, back on the road, had looked downward from the hill and seen the wheat spread evenly, the grass beyond, and no more! How many look at life itself and see no more!

Two miles across the fields, two miles that were neither straight nor crooked, this way and that, here to avoid a crop, there to find the better crossing of a ditch, until we stood below the castle mound, a natural swelling of the land whence all the campo could be seen.

And small, the castle—no true castle, but an eastern tower, the black, looping flight of crows around it, and a walled yard west, a pentagonal enclosure, with the tower, planned in oblong, rising as a fifth wall opposite the sharp, western peak of the yard. Walls of stone, yellow-brown, squared and faced, but fallen into ruin.

We climbed the hundred feet of hill and went into the yard through a breach in the wall. A tower for sentinels, a yard for horses, and stone-sure safety for a small band in refuge. No place of garrison, this, nor built for siege; but an eye of the periphery, a place of observation on the edge of power, whence far horizons must be scanned and signal backward sent of danger drawing near. And if the response should be the order "Hold! Delay the attack!" this place must hold against the forces of advance and ask no aid, expect no aid, but hold, playing for life only because while life remains there is delay, time for the rear to organise effective resistance. An outpost of the Dark Ages—and the principles of war, unchanged, demand the same of a fort, of an outpost, to-day. Observe, inform; resist to the utmost delay of the enemy.

How many ancient towers and defences there were in this part of the country where the route along the Henares and the Jalón crosses the watershed! Two of them we had seen now, and others were betrayed by their names on the map—torre, tower. Besides Torrehermosa and Torremocha del Campo there were Torrecuadrada, Torre de Valdealmendras, Torremocha de Jadraque, Torralba de Moral, and the Castillo de Villaseca, the walls of Medinaceli. Defences that must date, we thought, from the tenth and eleventh centuries; from early conflict with the Moors.

The plain antiquity of this oblong tower held a light pall of mystery to the place, and in it, around it, was the odour, nigh evaporated, of the dry dust of ruin that still time does not blow from where the vigorous past has mouldered like a bygone season's leaves. Of what had happened here we knew nothing; but men had strongly built for the safety of their land, and all their work was over, the need so past that here was ruin. The force and effort, the straining and exhaustion, the triumph and the joy, the defeat and the anger—all the springing energy of a generation, of a people, dead long ago sent, from their far-gone day, some faint, perceptible perfume of their strength, their life, their work, exhaled by this place, this tower, for us and for all who come after us, until the last lifted stone shall crumble or fall to the ground, yielding, in its fall and decay, the last breath of that dead effort to diffuse into later time.

The wall of the yard was breached, and the tower was hollow to the sky. A stairway there had been, and two or three levels of floor, but no simplicity of wood remained. There was no sign of gate nor other entrance—the enclosure and the tower, were there no breach in the wall, could not, it seemed, be entered by any but a secret, undiscovered way.

The crows had claimed the tower for their own. All day, and through all time now, they circle about it, looping and winding, dispersing and returning and roosting. Black, black, and shiny, and with such decision in their flight that they must know what they do, they seem to spin and wind and pull dissolving strands of some dark and mournful secrecy about the tower, as if their flight and the mere shadow of their flight wrote for themselves the record of a deep, continuous knowledge that we shall never attain. Harshly they scolded our presence as we looked up through the tower, harshly, without remission, and with indignant courage. At a sudden shout or a clap of the hands they scattered far into the air; a dry noise of confusion like the collapse of a pile of cardboard boxes, then the diminishing whirr, as they spread outward into wing-silence and spasmodic squawking. But each time they left a sentinel on the tower, and each time there came back a scout, another, another, and then the cloud gathered in, rowdily disputing the room but settling into rest, only to scold us again—all but two or three, which circled near and far, sentinels for ever on the wing. The tower's heritage of crows, a cloud of crows, roosting, living, dying, black, and always there. Hostile, unfathomable consciousness of crows. Insolent usurpation of crows. Life that is mystery sustained, as ours to them, its fullness and quality unknown.

Quietly the day faded into evening. We went out from the crow-haunted ruin and sat against the wall, facing the west. A gentle radiance had stolen into the air, that brightening of things that comes before the dark, and from our hilltop we could see, could look down into, the hamlet of la Torresaviñán to the north, so close it seemed. A closeness of small, far things on this plain, featureless campo. And the air so clear. The castle itself, seen from far away, had not looked so small—it had grown small on approach. Observed one from another ships five miles apart at sea look close, so clear are lines and surfaces; and here, the same, a proximity of distant things.

The very crows were quiet—as ourselves. Darkening sky, and the weight of impending night on the hills. Melancholy—exquisite melancholy of silence. Deeper the stillness grew, and Torremocha del Campo lay in shadow. Light stole from the west and vanished, and the night crept slowly in from all sides evenly, bringing coolness, and awakening tiny creatures everywhere. Faint cricket-noises, rustling, ticking in the grass; and pale stars brightening against the visible sky.

We rose to go back to the village, and we marked the black mass of a hill behind it, and a star above the church, guiding marks to lead us surely there. Night overtook us on the ploughed ground, and we stumbled across the fields, through the wheat, stirring the shrill crickets to their utmost vibrant song and startling tiny, sticky frogs, as we sought uncertain ways across the brook, the ditches, the low fences, and the moister fields.

In Torremocha del Campo the church bell was ringing; we could see our star, brightly glittering now; but there was no moon—the night was black and starry, darker now than our looming hill beyond the village. And the dew fell, or gathered, on the wheat. Night time. Infinite, cool void of the sky, deeply felt, and all but the nearest things on earth unseen. Pulse of the frog and cricket calls, from everywhere; and one bell sounding.

Night, but for this night, had been absent from our journey. Not before, not even at Vayrac nor at Châtelus-Malvaliex, had we gathered a depth of pure night into this adventure of ours. For at night we were indoors, among people, and early in bed, soon and soundly asleep, sleeping as only health and fatigue could make us do.

But this night bore a flood of loveliness, acquaintance with the hidden campo—the cool air and the sharp stars drawn over it. No moon.

Did I want a languid and involuntary moon, a round, slow moon, pale apricot? You had been wanting a black darkness like the night in Texas.

This unpremeditated possession of the night brought into the journey for us both, I think, a night-beauty which did more than please; it satisfied. Perfection has a fragile existence, and the near-perfect is good enough for tears. Night, with its moon and stars, the sea, the close companionship of women—these were the subtracted things whose absence brought the quality of our adventure far down below perfection; but there were moments, hours, here and there a day, of near-perfection—good enough for tears. Torremocha del Campo!

So good were our guiding marks, the star, the bell, that we came right on to the cart track that led past the side of our patrón's house to the main road.

The whole family, father, mother, a big girl and a little girl, were waiting anxiously for us, and they told us that we had done a very foolish thing to try to walk across the campo in the dark. In vain we told them of stars and bells and tried to explain the principles of keeping direction at night. They only shook their heads and repeated that it was a very foolish thing and we might have got lost. I believe that we disappointed the good people—we should have got lost, yet here we were, safe and sound! We became a little tired of hearing about it, and asked them if dinner were ready.

They took us through the kitchen into a whitewashed dining room where we sat at a small table in the middle of the room. Under the table was a brazier full of live coals—in these parts of Castile one is glad to have a fire at night as late as May—and around the table stood, throughout the meal, our patrón and several other men whom, it seemed, he had invited to come and gaze at us.

These men were what we would call in my country "a rough-looking bunch," but in Spain, it is well not to judge by appearances. They were interested in strangers, and were disposed not to criticise but to observe and inquire. We were a "show," yet we felt no embarrassment, because the audience gave us the respect of equality, and answered questions as frankly and readily as it asked them. It even lent us a knife when it saw that we had only the one between us.

The elder girl served the dinner, an omelette, potato, and uncooked ham, while the patrón acted as chorus. The information we received was less definite than what we gave, for these men understood the past of their country only in the vaguest way. We asked how old was the tower. "Very, very old." Did it date from early Moorish times? "Certainly, it must be that old." Was there much Moorish blood in the people of this district? The question aroused the patrón to a kind of enthusiasm, and he answered proudly and with emphasis "En todos, todos!—It's in all of us!" and went on to explain that it *must* be in all of them, because the Moors had been in that part of the country "for a thousand years." We decided *not* to conclude that there is much Moorish blood in the Spaniards of the present day.

Towards the end of the meal the patrón became restive. He had been observing each of us carefully, looking from one to the other, comparing and contrasting us, pondering and considering, until, when I glanced up at him during a pause in the conversation, he pointed to me, then to you, and asked laconically "Padre é hijo?—What are you—father and son?"

The question, and the interpretation, were so unexpected that we burst into laughter at the absurdity of it, and explained that we were not relatives but only camaradas desde años—friends of long acquaintance—and added that we had met at a university. The patrón looked, for a moment, as if he felt that he ought to apologise, but the spontaneity of our amusement, the absence of any sign of offence on our part, relieved them all, and they were highly satisfied with the explanation. "University" seemed as if it would make anything rational to their minds, and it raised us at once to the level of scholars in their esteem.

When dinner was over the men left us, after much formality of leave-taking. They had enjoyed the diversion of our presence—of the presence of strangers with whom they could talk, in Torremocha.

We went into the kitchen to have coffee by the fire. The fire-place was very like that of the kitchen at Bujaraloz, a low hearth with ingle seats, but the cowl or canopy of the chimney did not hang like a hood over the seats here. The patrona made the coffee, and the family cat persisted in getting in her way by trying repeatedly to get right next to the fire. The coffee was made by an interesting process of decantation which required three vessels, all of shining copper or brass. Two stood empty on the hot hearth, where they warmed. In the third, which stood right in the fire, water was boiling. The coffee was put into an empty pot and boiling water was then poured over it. When it had drawn and the grounds had settled the liquid was carefully poured off into the other empty pot, in which, according to where it was placed on the hearth, it was kept hot, or very hot, without boiling. Yes, two vessels would do, but boiling water has other uses. Excellent coffee it was, preserving the full flavour and the aroma of its volatile oils.

We saw no more of the patrón or patrona after coffee, but the two girls, aged about fourteen and ten, might be said to have gone to bed with us. The narrow alcove that was called our bedroom was a backward continuation of the wider, front room occupied by the girls. Neither door nor curtain separated us. Luckily, we went to bed by the light of candles, and it was all very discreet, very innocent, and very embarrassing for us; very natural on the part of the little girls, to whom the idea of immodesty was evidently unknown. The blushful possibilities of morning were averted by the little girls themselves, who got up quietly and early, so that we had the room, or "open suite," as you called it, to ourselves when we got out of bed at half-past eight.

The bill, presented by this house that had assumed the function of a posada, was less modest than the accommodation, thirteen pesetas. The farewells and good wishes, however, were in the best form of courtesy, and the elder girl, our waitress, was delighted with a tip of one peseta in coppers, handed to her one by one. It was a relief to get rid of those coppers. They weighed our pockets down like silver duros.

Now, this day that followed the day of Torremocha, Alcolea del Pinar and the divide, was, in some senses, an empty day—the inevitable "next day." It brought us nearer to Madrid, through country that was different from the last, through places that were new, as every day of its forty-nine forerunners had done, and we enjoyed it, but, as a day, it had little quality of its own. We were not aware of this while the day was passing and there is no loss to regret in the pleasant passage of its time. Neither is there any great gain to record. No telling of the miles can here unroll a pageant of wide landscape nor release the fluctuations of a mood. Lightly we passed from incident to incident, lightly gathering amusement from trivial hours, and lightly enough we held the day's disposal at the time. Why, then, tell the miles, or even try, when there is little to evoke, to weave any thin union of continuity out of its weak thread? Step, rather, as we did, from little happening to little happening, from change to change, and let this day's length be a trivial chain of unimportant, entertaining things.

When we left Torremocha we expected, I believe, to walk for hours along the campo, but we had forgotten that the campo is only the open head of the valley of a tiny stream that flows northwest to the Henares and that the road goes across it, not along it. Minutes brought us out of the low, hospitable bottom and set us among the naked hills again.

During our first halt I was able to return to the roadside, from seclusion by a stone wall, with trophies; tiny, delightful flowers that pleased you, and some equally beautiful internal casts of shells, fossils from the red clay of the hillside. But the fossils did not please you, so I put them on the ground—the right place for fossils—and we left them behind.

Hills that were smooth and grassy, unbroken hills of clay, lifted us to the level of the plateau and to a last view over the campo of Torremocha, the broad vale of yesterday, sunk now to the proportion of a soft crevice in the hard expanse of Castile. Hard—yes, even if, at first, these undulating hills were made of clay. Hills, and the open road that rose and fell across them, traversing an empty land of slow, slight change.

But change enough, of soil to rock, of grass to scrubby bushes; empty land, where one lonely caminero house clung to the flank of a formidable hill that flung the road leftward aside, into a sharp twist of ascent, only to let it spring back, just over the summit of the ridge, as if on hinges, just too far to the right, to point, not towards Madrid, but westward towards Algora. A crumpled elbow, with the caminero house in the crook of the bend. To shorten the curve we climbed up the open hillside past the house, and felt, more closely than the road could make us feel, the quality of this scrubby land. Moorland. A few stone walls. And springy bushes, low, dense cushions of vegetation that supported our weight easily.

We called them thyme bushes, a stiff aromatic heather-growth, but I doubt not that our botany was faulty.

The caminero house, warm with life in that lonely place, had a plot of bare earth in front of it, a familiar yard. There were tubs and kitchen utensils by the open door, poultry scraping and pecking among the bushes. It was, I believe, our last caminero house but one, and certainly the last one of our journey to be remembered vividly.

Admirable things, these low, white houses, not for any beauty, but for what they express—the care of main roads in Spain, the manner of that care, and the presence of men in lonely places.

In that last they express the very way in which the Spaniards occupy so much of their country: a nation clotted into villages and little towns that lie far apart, the space between them almost empty of dwellings. Nearly everywhere that we saw caminero houses or camineros themselves they were away out in this intervening emptiness. On the irrigated coastlands of Valencia and on the green Biscayan mountains, houses are dotted over the countryside, I believe, but nearly everywhere else in Spain men have clustered their homes together into villages, for the greater warmth of life in a few places where it may securely grow, rather than spread life thinly and precariously over the lean, haggard land.

Algora, down under the western end of the big hill, was a tiny huddle of stone-sheltered poverty in the empty, rolling expanse of poverty. A place very like Saúca, lying just off the road on the outside of a bend that swung direction back again towards Madrid. We turned aside into the village, a hungry collection of stone cottages one storey high, gathered around a poor little square with a pump and a few debilitated trees for public use and adornment. Glad we were that we had not come to Algora yesterday! Dust. A slow, Sunday-morning activity of people going to church. At the pump, a girl, who told us which house was "the shop."

It was a very small shop with little to sell, but there was a pious notice on the wall that said "*Se prohibe la blasfemia*," which, if expressed in the English way, means "Customers are respectfully requested not to blaspheme," and, in the more direct, American manner, "Don't curse in here!" Under this testimony of the godliness of Algora we bought wine, bread, sardines, cake, and chocolate, and then fled the place.

A straight road mounted easily uphill to the level top of a limestone terrain that spread before us for miles; rectilinear, Roman miles, if measured along the road, but no longer were they empty miles. No longer were they bare and poor and open. It felt as if the hills behind us had been dumb—that this high flatness had broken into some halting kind of speech.

For it had the gift of trees. A power to put forth, however meagrely at first, a richer expression of endowment than the hills of grass. Low sturdy trees that had learnt the way of life in hard places and knew how to resist, with their rough bark and woody twig and stiff, perennial leaf, the rigours of exposure. The further we went the more the trees increased in size and the better became their appearance. It was part of their character to be small, but, as they became numerous, clumped here and there into groves, they displayed more and more the fulness of their character in health and prosperity. Indeed, the whole countryside was here looking more prosperous than the bare moorland hills behind us.

This level table of hard, blue limestone between the Henares on the north and west, and the Tajuña on the south-east, had a surface of mouldered, stony soil, and soil formed by the rotting of impure limestone is generally good in quality, be it even stony and shallow. It was good enough here to grow trees and wheat, and the loose stones had been carefully gathered from the open fields.

Everywhere there were stone walls, as if the stones themselves had drawn aside from the fields and grown up into rims around them. In the most useless places, and especially where the bare rock was exposed, there were great piles of stones, the excess of encumbrance that was not required for the building of walls. Every stone had been dug up, lifted, and carried from far out in the fields, that a plough might pass the more easily through the soil; that the wheat grow densely for full harvests.

Too much stone—too many stones! It caused you to utter a complaint on the unfair and uneven distribution of things. "If only they could send these stones to Montauban!" And I believe that, in your imagination, you were altering it all, arranging it better, working out plans that would begin with the formation of an American company to transport stones from high Castile to the plains of Montauban where the unfortunate inhabitants must make bricks out of clay if they would build anything or should they suffer any other need of stoniness. I commend the plan, for Montauban must need great quantities of stone. It reminded me of the Pitcairn islanders who replied, when asked by the captain of a passing ship if they could make use of some spare wood, "A *very great quantity* of wood would be *very* welcome indeed."

But why not bring the stones for Montauban from Lot instead of Castile, and so avoid the tariff that would undoubtedly be levied on stone should the business prosper? Why, indeed, if you would make the distribution of things more even, begin with so unwieldy a substance as stone at all? Except at places like Montauban it is not a coveted commodity. Most people are hardly aware that it *is* a commodity, and there are other things that would appeal more readily to the common understanding. For example, you might deliver knives and pepper to Spanish villages. Again, there are not many kittens in France. And they say that there are no cats at all in Sweden because there are no mice! Imagine a civilised country without mice! But, if it must be stone, why not begin by transferring the excess of your own New England to East Texas?

Even among the trees, in this unexploited quarry-land of Castile, there were old walls, old walls in disrepair, that looked as if they served no purpose any more, and said, perhaps, that the trees had grown over what used to be arable land. We had lunch under the trees by such a wall, deep in a grove that spread so far that we called it a forest, a place for close acquaintance with the trees and the old walls.

I had wanted them to be cork trees, because Don Quixote rested so many times in the shade of cork trees, but we were never to learn which of the trees of Spain is the cork tree. They were all *encinas*, holm oaks or evergreen oaks, very like the live oaks of California in appearance. Low trees, roughly graceful and round, with a twisted sturdiness of character; familiar, hardy things that reminded me somewhat of the *hakeas* of the rocky hills around Sydney on account of their rough bark and stiff, dark green leaves. They had, too, an indefinable resemblance to olive trees—if an olive tree could set, from its light openness, into something denser, as a clear liquid sets into solid wax, it would turn into something resembling a holm oak. Ghost and body, substance and shadow, negative image and positive print—in some such way, and not through any system of botany, the olive and the holm oak are bound in unsubstantial relationship.

Acorns much larger than those of the common oak were strewn on the ground under the trees. I am sure that Sancho's wife must have sent the Duchess acorns of this very kind in return for that gift of a cast-off dress; a quaint exchange of courtesies, and I have always wondered what the Duchess did with so large a consignment of acorns. It is true that she asked for them, but for what imaginable use? Did she, anticipating the Versailles manner of polite farming, offer them to the pigs herself, or is it possible, could it be possible, that in asking for acorns from la Mancha the Duchess was only making covert sport of simple Teresa Panza? The Duchess who rode beside me for a little while some nine days ago was not a lady who would understand the labour of gathering quantities of the best acorns.

A new kind of acorn, however, is an interesting thing to admire. But to sit on acorns where the ground is hard is a thing that no Duchess would consent to do for long. There are places in the bush out in Australia where we have to sweep the hard, woody eucalyptus capsules aside if we want to sit on the ground, and here in the oak forest we had to sweep the ground clear of acorns before we were able to sit comfortably with our backs to the old stone wall.

We were in a secluded place but not a lonely one. Even in the forest that intimation of the nearness of people, which was never quite absent from the feeling of the loneliest parts of Castile, came to us all the time and from different directions. We were not far from the road, and a cart or a car passed by now and then, moving with an easy quietness, like persons who make little noise because they are in a restful place. Beyond the road and away off through the trees we could see the roofs of Mirabueno, a shy village not on any road and two miles distant from us. To our right a boy was working in a field outside the forest; and we could hear the voices of people in a brake beyond a small olive grove behind us, people who proved to be charcoal burners.

It was good to be aware of the closeness of others while shielded from direct intercourse with them. And we were glad, even under the trees, to have the protection of a stone wall. Our voices doubtless betrayed our presence but the wall hid us from view. The sky clouded over while we were having lunch and the light wind became uncomfortably cold. It found its way through chinks and crannies of the wall, and touched our backs with tips of chill flame that made us shiver. Before lunch was over a thin rain began to swirl gently through the air. Pulses of erratic wind carried it aslant and swept light eddies and puffs of spray right in under the trees—twisted them down between the trees. A rain so cold that you proposed that we try to build a fire.

We did so—built a fire of twigs on an improvised hearth (memories of picnics in the bush at home!) against the wall. The presence of a fire reminded you of the uses of fires. You wanted to cook something. There was nothing to cook but what was left of the chocolate. You would make a hot drink, hot chocolate, and there was a professional efficiency in the way you pared and grated the chocolate into my German soldier's pannikin—my only trophy of the War—mixed it with water, brought it to the boil; and there was an expression of satisfaction in your very movements as you fulfilled here, near the end of the journey, part of this long suppressed wish to cook food by the roadside. Well, we drank it. A dirty-looking beverage. Most unsavoury. A few minutes later we were astonished to feel the benefit of a hot, nourishing drink on that cold day! Bad as it was to taste, I was not sorry that you had "made hot chocolate." It puts us on the road again, after a delay of two hours in the wood.

We soon emerged from the trees and the light rain, into clearing air and opener country. And we wondered, so different was this lightly forested district from anything we had seen before, if the country around Madrid would resemble it? We thought it possible that the land was increasing gradually in richness as we approached Madrid, but would it be like this, there? What, on this meseta of Castile, would be the nature of country that could rear a great city in its midst? Idle speculation, for Madrid, like Washington D.C., is a foundation, and not at all a natural inevitable growth from out the life of its nearer surroundings, upon which it does not greatly depend for its existence.

Emergence into the open brought us, too, within sight of the grey Sierra de Guadarrama, or of its north-eastern prolongation, the Sierra de Ayllón, which lay parallel to our line of march some thirty-five miles to the north-west, and remained beside us, nearly always in view, for the rest of the way to Madrid. A real mountain *chain*, this, and a real *sierra* or saw-toothed line of summit, clad with a little, thin snow on the crests—fountains of the upper air, six thousand five hundred feet above the sea, that keep the rivers of the upland flowing. The road where we were walking lay at about three thousand one hundred feet above sea level—already we had descended somewhat from Alcolea del Pinar towards the Tagus—but the lofty, bare sierra springs from the high pedestal of the meseta by more than this height again, and lies across the land, a barrier between Old and New Castile. It seemed to be conducting us, like a guiding wall, towards Madrid, separating us from that older Spain which lay beyond it—from Roman Segovia, just on the other side; from Salamanca, Valladolid, Palencia, León.

So ran the company of two things now, beside us on the right; the sierra, far away, and the telegraph line, familiarly at hand.

This road of the early afternoon was dull. It would take us, I knew, straight on, across a far monotony of gentlest, open slopes, with no town or place of interest to the day's late end. Yesterday it had been so easy to change our plan. Why not also to-day?

"Max, this main road leads nowhere, but there's a big town on the map, Brihuega, not much out of the way, if we take the next turnoff to the left. We can join the main road again at Torija to-morrow without losing too much time. What about it?"

"Sure! Let's go to Bree-way-ga!"

There was not a house nor a village in sight, and the country seemed to be deserted, yet, when we came to the turnoff, we found a rural gathering there. "Youths and maidens dancing on the greensward," as the old books would say, dancing to the tune of an automatic piano which was decorated with a "genuine oil painting" on the front and equipped with a handle at the side. Cracked music, rustic behaviour, and a serious merriment, all under the supervision of a village padre who was enjoying himself and the occasion quite as much as the thirty or forty boys and girls. There was nothing uncommon about these ordinary young people with their piano and their padre, but in the very simplicity of the gathering there was a warm beauty, as if, in sending youth to dance on the grass at the lonely junction of roads on a Sunday afternoon, half a dozen villages that lay unseen in the miles around us had brought to life some sylvan ritual of a Grecian urn.

The temptation to join in youth's activity is strong, and we both slackened our pace to loiter past the group, hesitated, paused, but went on again. Brihuega demanded that we walk some four hours more, and it was already mid-afternoon.

At three o'clock we were resting in the open by the side of our new, second-class road. Far away to the west we could see the telegraph line along the main road—the nearer miles of nearly twenty miles of that line, that road, that we would never know. Once before, near Balaguer, we had forsaken the familiar main road, but here, with the telegraph poles no more beside us, we felt the absence of their faithful escort, as if some accustomed presence had gone away and left us alone.

On the map there were villages. We could see none. All the space between us and the sierra far away in the west might have been empty of men, save for the vague indication of places given by a branch road here and there. Roads that "went somewhere." But where? The roads are lonely in this part of the province, for they pass directly from little town to little town, and touch few villages. They meet and cross in open, deserted places. The villages lie in seclusion, aside from the main roads, and are not to be entered by those who do not know the tracks and secret footways across the fields and through the scrubby groves. Like all villages, they exist for their own people, and a stranger, though not unwelcome, finds no prepared and rightful place in them.

Four o'clock brought us opposite Hontanares, a low, stone village a mile away down a long slope to the left. Shallow rolls in the ground, patchy fields of wheat, stone walls, and here and there a woman out in the fields at work among the wheat.

Yela we did not see. It lay too far from the road. But we knew exactly where it was; felt that it was there, down in a flat hollow to the south-east; and beyond it the land sank deeply over an edge to hidden things of lower, less open existence. Opposite Yela there were two ruined houses of stone, close to the road, on the right. Lonely, abandoned, rare of their kind in Spain, they expressed the colour of Yela, had the colour of Hontanares, the quarry-colour of the stone, the smoky cream of skin where the veins pass underneath, a pallor of exposure, colder than the weathered grey-green, blue-grey colour of the native rock.

At five we were just within the edge of another forest of holm oaks that might, for lack of any difference of appearance, have been the one where we had lunch. There was still a little of the chocolate left, and we munched it as we sat leaning against a wall under the trees.

There was an intimate leisure in this quietness of leaves. A cold, clear light, the clean road through the forest, the mature formality of walls among the rigidly graceful holm oaks, fused into this early evening to saturate it with a feeling of peaceful custom which brought a slow, country procession most naturally out along the road from the direction of Brihuega. It came as if it always came, at five o'clock on Sunday evenings, to pass at that place from the forest into the open.

Men and their women, riding bareback on mules and asses, the men sitting astride, the women sideways. In front of each man a heavy white sack was tensely cushioned across the withers of the beast of much burden. There is a great difference between the looks of people who are going to a place for a certain purpose, and of people who are returning from a place, their purpose fulfilled. These people had all been to Brihuega for some business of Sundays that was concerned, partly, at any rate, with a heavy commodity in light coloured sacks. And now they were going home, without hurry, letting the laden animals choose their own most comfortable pace; going home, relaxed in easy silence, to turn aside from the main road, two by two, on to narrow tracks that would disperse the long procession among the hidden villages. Men and their women of the Castilian peasantry, husbands and wives.

They were all mature people, established people who might have homes and children, and, as I watched them ride past, I thought, more strongly than I had ever thought before, of how "male and female created he them" so different! Not anywhere else, not in any order of society, have I seen men so different in appearance from their womenfolk, their mates. Rather colourful women, and comely, where no comparison with other kinds of women was possible, out here among the stone walls and fields. They were all well rounded, a little stout, placidly confident and mild. Because their heads were bare their good-tempered features showed to advantage, and their tight bodices drawn across comfortable bosoms, their full, dark skirts falling over not-too-ample hips, were true to their place in life, harmonious with physique and setting. Stout women on donkeys. There was an elusive colour about them—or, there remains in my mind an impression of colour about them. It was not in any brightness of garments, for the skirts were all dark, the ground-colour of nearly all the plain, figured-print bodices was dark, navy blue or ink blue, and faded from the wash. A tan bodice or a white one here and there. For trimming, a simple braid around the wrists and neck. Where, then, was the colour if not in the vivid, animal health of clear skins and bright brown eyes? They were less women, in the civilised sense, than fine specimens of the human female, wifely, maternal, well-mated, content. Talk to one of these about feminism, women's votes, careers for women. "Is it not enough," she would say, "to love our men, to breed and rear the race? For everything else, sea como Dios quiera."

The men were glowering pirates, "the toughest-looking men in Spain," as you said at the time. Swarthy, fierce devils, bristling with unshaven hair and darkly shabby. Men of the kind the imagination pictures in bloody scenes of lawlessness, typical desperados for the sack and burning of innocent towns, for the scuttling of innocent ships. Faces for cutlass and gunpowder; eyes that might scowl instinctively at all outsiders; throats for rum; hands and wrists with the grip of merciless violence asleep in them. Sinewy men of action, vehicles of ruffianly passion and strength, cruelty latent in them, native as it is to birds and beasts of prey. Men of gristle and bone and skin and wiry hair, who know that they can take when they want. So, at least, they appeared. The natural mates of these soft, placid women. To look at them as they passed by was to feel the same incredulity that we manifest when a zoologist assures us that two creatures, utterly different in character and proportion, are the male and female of the same species.

The procession was long, strung out with unequal intervals, and we exchanged greetings with all who came, during our first quarter of an hour back on the road. They were genuine, spontaneous greetings, of beaming smiles, more in the eyes than on the lips, from the women; and of brief but neighbourly phrases from the men, a respect and cordiality of tone rather than of word. A slow, easy passage; flopping ears of the donkeys and mules, round women gently swaying to the gait, the men taciturn, a silence among them almost of abstraction, except when they greeted us. It was not a lively pageant but there was intense life in it, quiescent, volcanic life in the men (which, conceivably, might remain so throughout the lives of many of them); profoundly welling life in the women; patiently accepted life in the animals; and, in the whole irregular train of people riding home from town with heavy sacks, an incident in the insistent business of living onward through the years.

When we got past them we were in open country again and grey storm-clouds were gathering over it. Past them? No, for here came more, far down the straight road. We met them just as the head of their short column got to the top of a long slope, and we had barely said good evening to the last man when his mule lost its long-suffering temper and threw him and the inevitable sack roughly to the ground. He shouted to the others, who slackened their pace but offered no help. We rushed back, to find a very angry man luckily unhurt from what looked like a dangerous fall, and the three of us wrestled and strained with a sack of incredible weight until we had it nicely balanced across the mule's withers again. That done, we helped the mollified asineer back into his seat, and gravely exchanged courtesies with him. The man was very glad to have had our help, and he thanked us both well and sincerely.

The sack was ponderous, full of hard pellets that felt like coarse, dried beans. For a rider to dismount and leave his beast when such a load has been properly adjusted would incur the risk of having to load the sack on to the beast again. We understood the men in front now. An unseated companion must help himself, unless help come unexpectedly from foreign pedestrians.

And once more we learnt how deceptive the villainous appearance of some of these rough Spanish peasants can be. For all we knew, or know, the "pirates" of this procession may have been "a bad lot," but they understood respect and the use of courtesy in a way that made them pleasant and interesting people to meet. And in them there were the vitality and vigour that make these country processions of Spain a stronger manifestation of health than are the similar streams of country people who come out along the roads in tired and complaining France.

"The man who came a gutzer," as we called him in the coarse vernacular of my native country, passed on, and left us an empty road for the rest of the day. Cloudy and cold the evening, the damp air laden with late sunlight that settled slowly down from brightness to clear dullness. The land stony, barren, the stunted holm oaks far apart and few. Grey, purple-grey and steel-grey, the rocks, and the sky the same.

At one place, on the left, a shepherd stood motionless against a bare hill, and behind the hill a gulf of sky. Something lay beyond that hill, some great, deep openness—Yela!—an edge of this high world, or a cleft in its expanse. The shepherd was much wrapped in heavy plaid blankets, but his armour against the cold and the damp was imperfect, for the casings of his legs, a kind of leggings, extended downward to meet, not the strong boots of out-of-doors, but flimsy, inadequate sandals.

Rain, a slow, soaking mist of rain, drove us into a tiny stone structure shaped like a beehive, that seemed to be standing by the roadside offering itself for our use. We sat huddled inside it, cramped for room, but glad enough to have found even this neat, uncomfortable igloo. It was, in its way, a structure of beauty, like the terrace-walls of Andorra, built out of the loose stones of the neighbouring ground, which were fitted and piled, ring on diminishing ring, upward to a group of wedged-in keystones at the round apex. The inside was smooth as if the stones had been roughly faced. A toy-like thing that might have been built, like a house of cards, for the simple pleasure of success in piling an insecure stability, but there was no insecurity here. Skill, knowledge of stone, had built it solidly, and as strongly as if mortar had been used. We sat in it until the rain melted again into a bright, balmy light of evening.

About a mile beyond here the map promised us a village on the road, a village with a bad name, Villaviciosa—Seat of Corruption—and beyond it, an unexplained monument.

We were sure that we walked right over the site of Villaviciosa, but we found it not. No place existed, nor sign or trace that any such town ever had existed, where it should have been. We found the monument, a long way past the spot where Villaviciosa should have been, the Monumento del Centenario, a plain obelisk with a few young saplings around it, inside an ugly square of iron railing;

a new monument, commemorating something that had happened about two hundred years ago, but what? The monument did not tell. Had the surrounding tribes risen in anger against Villaviciosa and smitten it with destruction, burned, razed, annihilated it so that no trace of its dust remained? For, if a town there had been, it had suffered extermination for its wickedness, had vanished, and the place upon which it used to stand had merged again into the stern landscape without blemish of occupation, to baffle archæology.

Our map was a sheet of the Carte Michelin, a simple, clear route-map on a scale large enough to show all villages. Hitherto we had found it to be not only trustworthy but accurate. We believed, therefore, in Villaviciosa as a place remembered for its sins, but smitten out of existence. Quite likely, we thought, that Providence had devoured it in wrath this very day, for the safety of our righteous journey towards Brihuega. Could not that long procession of seductive women and savage-looking men have been the few chosen to survive, wandering out into the wilderness? Not one of those women had looked back!

Unfortunately for the romance, however, the Carte Michelin of Spain appeared in a new, revised edition long after our journey was over, and redeemed Villaviciosa. The older map showed it in the wrong position. The village thrives innocently, at a place two miles east of where it was shown, and lies in secluded hiding down among the hills where strangers are not likely to disturb it. And, if the whole truth must be told, *vicioso* means luxuriant and vigorous, as well as corrupt and unruly. But of all this we knew nothing at that time. A place there should have been, and behold, it was not! We were deeply impressed, and we passed on ready to encounter grand or solemn things. We were not disappointed, for grandeur was near us.

Not far beyond the monument the straight road began to bend, as the nature of the country began rapidly to change. From the shallow undulations of the stony plateau we passed on to smooth, open hills. Hills? With incredible swiftness we came to see the whole south-eastern side of the landscape fall, plunge, as over an edge, into a deep, straight valley or gorge, a cleft of open underspace, grandly proportioned, the valley of the Tajuña, which flows, deeply entrenched, south-westward towards the Tagus.

Such profound emptiness of space below us we had not seen since we left the gorge of the Jalón and passed through the Puerto Cavera to ascend to the unconvincing loftiness of the top of Spain five days ago. More than the coldness of nights in May, more than thin air and upland grass, more, far more than any reasoned process of the mind, this void of lower air beneath us raised Castile into the sky. Down through the plateau the river had sawn to lower, more familiar levels of the world, here. We were on the high top. That, down there, was nearer to the plane of common things.

It was not, by comparison, a deep or narrow gorge. I estimate from the map that the river lay there about seven hundred feet below the top of the plateau. But the unexpected nobility of proportion, the contrast with the mild and gradual rise and fall of the last few days, made the valley of the Tajuña magnificently imposing. The open steepness of grassy slopes, the bold smoothness of the far side of the valley, the restful simplicity of dull colour—a faded olive green—the clear, bright stillness of the evening, the silence of great space, drew the massive world into that biblical peace of the mountains and the valleys. It was the last natural grandeur the journey was to reveal to us—the valley of the Tajuña.

Brihuega lay suspended in a niche or amphitheatre high above the river but far down the valley side. The road fell towards it, winding a long, gentle way down and around the hills. It was joined by a new, gentler, and still longer road lined with young saplings. The mature road passed under the elms of a narrow, green park that pointed towards the town, and it ran past a fountain, a handsome pedestal and semi-circular trough of stone, the Fuente del Centenario. Again the centenary, and there was a date on the fountain which I have forgotten. But, the trees, the park, the fountain—here was a studied dignity of things laid out to mellow into rich, heavy beauty, which they had long since done. What centenary, for a monument, a fountain? We were never properly to know.

We entered another, less monumental park of shady chestnuts, a small pleasaunce rather than a park, that lay just outside the town, where Sunday crowds were listening to the band. Then into the town we passed, under the round arch of a stone gate, across the top of which ran an inscription in Latin. Brihuega, some two hundred years before, had resisted siege and bombardment, but in what manner, in what cause, and against what enemy are secrets that our Latin was unable to unlock. We were satisfied merely to be in Brihuega as early as half-past six.

Long, long, and peaceful, the Summer evenings of Spain! There is time in them for life and joy, time, after the day's exacting work, for everything. People are not lazy then. They walk, stroll, converse, and so fill these delightful hours of the day with a spirit of recreation that fatigue is banished from that short freedom for body and mind allowed us by the daily pattern of routine, the time when nothing else claims us, the very little time of each day that is truly our own. In Spain that time seems longer, fuller, than elsewhere. The natural length of Summer evening, prolonged by the hora oficial, prolonged by the lateness of dinner time, which is nowhere earlier than half-past nine and may be an hour later than that. There were hours of light before us in Brihuega. No need to hurry.

We found a café in an upper room on a main street, and felt ourselves held there, drinking more coffee than we needed, so quietly impelling was the animation of the place. A small room, plain, clean, comfortable, and crowded with youths and men who were talking vividly, playing billiards with intent interest, drinking coffee, smoking. A guardia, off duty, sat puffing the smoke of reverie in one corner. The coffee itself, and the service, equipment, and maintenance of the place were good—no waiting, no dullness of eyes, glassware, metal, or paint. A simple thoroughness, with no striving for effect or atmosphere, no pretence of being anything more than it was—an appropriate place for the drinking of good coffee in ease. Yet, what an atmosphere of life did fill the room! These boys and men were not rowdy, not under any of the impulses of coarse release that are so common in the privacy of exclusively male gatherings. They were braced in an almost serious enjoyment of simple, decent entertainment, and were finding it, for the time, enough, because, for the time, it was able to fill them.

Time. The long evenings. And room enough in them, in time, for other phases of life and joy. No need, here, to pursue all things at once, to scramble after life with the feverish, half-random clutch of haste, the fear of loss, the danger of defeat, that lie in speed and confusion.

Quite close to the café we found a large hotel where a stern old patrona presided over real, unadorned comfort with an inflexible severity that inspired confidence. We felt such privacy in our clean, airy little room overlooking the clean, airy little plaza that we knew this hotel to be properly and smoothly managed from its topmost chimney pot to the well in the back yard. An additional towel and hot water for shaving were supplied with grim, laconic promptitude by the patrona herself, who told us the hour of dinner and the way to the dining room in a vocal equivalent of shorthand. Thereafter, a magic invisibility of service left us without pretext to ask for anything, and left us delightfully free in the house.

While you shaved I leaned out the window to feel the fresh air on my smooth, clean face. Trees, heavy in sombre leaf. A long, low, gabled church on the other side of the plaza, unadorned and pleasing, its round windows half hidden by late additions to the southern side. Across the street, the telegraph office, gazing at the square with the self-consciousness of a modest public building on display where an imposing public building ought to be. Three or four large dogs, one of them a lady of loose morals who was unable to arouse more than a casual, disdainful interest among the gentlemen, had the little square to themselves. Quiet evening. A town with no noise, no droning, murky, ceaseless voice of activity borne to its gentler places.

When we went out and walked through this quiet town I had the feeling that I was a trespasser in public places. There were very few people about, especially in the side streets, and more than one such street led us into a cul de sac, a little plaza, from which there was egress only by retracing steps. To enter such a place and find it deserted felt like walking into the courtyard of one of those sombre hotels of the old French nobility in Paris. The illusion of being in a forbidden place was heightened when we found ourselves confronted, in one tiny, secluded plaza, by the ayuntamiento—the town hall, and the casa cuartel—the barracks of the Guardia civil. The old buildings had the somnolent air of locked cupboards in a darkened house, asleep and secure while the family is away on holidays. In another small, hidden plaza we found some timbered fronts and a grave, mature arcade along a row of shops.

There was no doubt that Brihuega was a town and not merely an overgrown village. It was a substantial place; plain, thorough, and satisfying in its architecture. The streets and open spaces were neatly cobbled, and down the gutters of the steeper streets—those that fronded naturally on to the fall of the hollow surface—clear water was running continually. In each tiny plaza the stone severity had been softened by the planting of a few trees, elms, that were still mere saplings, for this effort to adorn the town was recent. But the trees would grow. To judge from the park, uphill there, outside the wall, where the fountain was, these young trees in town should eventually flourish—because there is water.

I was beginning to understand, now, why Brihuega had grown just there, in its hollow niche on the valleyside. Water—issuing from the ground, at a place where there are both room for a town, and easy descent to the valley; that explains the existence of Brihuega.

There were no little streams back there on the limestone plateau, nor any villages, except at low places. The rain there sinks down through the porous, fissured rock, to break out in springs from underneath the limestone where the Tajuña has cut through the thickness of it. Springs that are *liberal*, *abundant*, and render possible the existence of places like Villa*viciosa*, Brihuega, and others along the valley, that are neither "*de arriba*—up-top," nor "*de abajo*—down at the bottom," as the names of many villages go, along the entrenched rivers of Castile.

We followed the running water of the gutters to the lower edge of the town, whence the land falls steeply to the river, and a road leads cautiously down, a long-sloping, elbowed way to the bottom. Down there, three, four hundred feet below, many people were walking on the gentler road beside the river, men and women arm in arm, boys and girls together, a fresh fullness of light-coloured dresses against the plain, still, tawny grass of the hollow slopes; a joyous aimlessness of movement against the valley's profound immobility. Voices, footsteps, the noise of running water, melted into the bright quietness of the valley's depth, and did not reach us here.

A lovely tranquillity this place had, so far out in the clean hills, close to the natural earth of things, and so peacefully remote from the civilised turmoil of the spirit. Brihuega, the place of utter repose, whose very name is a respiration unfatigued, is far, far from trains—nineteen kilometres, nearly thirteen miles, from the nearest station.

Should we go down there, to the bottom? A few people were already beginning to mount the long slopes of the road to town, paséo in the slow leisure of turntide that would bring them upward, young and old, refreshed from walking, unwearied by the climb. No—we would not go down there. We would go to the big round building on the shoulder of hill to north of town.

The mellow, institutional dignity of its beautiful setting drew us towards the round building on the hill. Dense garden spread far down the flanks to boundary walls of stone; and high, presiding, the monastery, college, or préfecture—whatever it might be—gazed up, across, and down the open valley, over the hollow cluster of the town, gazed into deep, surrounding day or night as with a clear steadiness of eyes in health. Light on the southern windows—cold; and aristocratically cold the walls, of umber-greenish stone and line severe. What could it be, that quiet place apart up there?

The road or street led us right around it, past the lowest side of the garden, then up to the top of the hill, a top which proved to be no summit at all, but only the end of a flattened spur. The building extended back in two great wings, on the flatter ground, which held the entrance in the angle between them. We passed through an arched vestibule into a patio where a large, circular fountain or flowing bath cooled the cool shadows of retirement. Wrought-iron grilles barred access to the several parts of the building that gave on to the patio. But where were the cowled monks, the pale students of Greek and Hebrew, or the sober officials of our expectant guesses? Down the long corridors behind the grilles perspective silence ran deserted. There was not even a lodge-keeper or a janitor to ask us what our business might be. We walked out, impressed, but unenlightened until we met some very ordinary townspeople who were moving, as with habit, among the outer parts of the building. They told us that it was no monastery, but a woollen mill; that it had long been a woollen mill. As for any former use, well, "Quien sabe? —Who can say?"

A woollen mill! And yet—what was this country of high Spain if not a pastoral country? Sheep—and shepherds who, wherever we saw them, were wrapped in thick woollen blankets like Scotch steamer rugs. There must be weaving in Spain, and why not here, in Brihuega? And why not in this big, low building, which (now that we come to look at the spreading wings from the right angle of the street that fits into their public, exterior walls) is a *used* place, a goal of traffic, where hoofs and tyres and heavy loads have worn the very air to laborious, lasting odour?

Along the west-running street that met the climbing streets from town were more young elms like those of the little, open spaces of the town below; elms that will flourish and become big trees of ponderous shade, to add their beauty to the calm, classic dignity of this most unfactorylike woollen mill in the world.

We went back into the town, between the houses and the wall that was built to protect Brihuega on its uphill side, a wall with vertical faces like the wall of York. Past the inscribed archway of the town gate, then further along the wall to where it mounted the southern shoulder of the niche.

Well might the town be proud of its defence two hundred years ago! To have withstood siege and bombardment under the commanding view of half-investing forward-slopes, the half-ring of heights up there, south and west and north, with nothing but this wall of stone to dam the weight and pressure of attack from above, was heroic, a resistance that would not now be possible.

Within the town many a tall house had been built with a view to defence. Heavy doors were already being barred and bolted as we threaded a way towards the hotel. Behind some of the doors we could hear sounds of animals in ground-floor stable for the night—Cubélls!—while other doors, open wide, stood waiting to seal the darkness on flocks of sheep and goats that were still jigging and shuffling up the cobbled streets—kickernicketty bunches of hesitation that thinned and thickened with elastic tug and pull, the last home from far, hillside pastures.

Brihuega had come to life. The people were back in town. When we had arrived, at half-past six, they were gathered into the public places—the park where the band was playing, the main streets, the cafés—and all the secluded backwaters were deserted and silent. The next hour had spread them out in strolling pairs along the roads, across the grassy hills and slopes, and the whole town may have been deserted. Now, at half-past nine, they were all back.

Paséo was over, and for many there was work—animals to tend—and for all there was dinner.

It seemed to me here that the habit of paséo distinguishes the town from the village, in Spain. We had seen the paséo often, in so many places, not quite alike in any two places, and all those places had the character of towns. They had paved streets. Were I asked how to tell a town from a village in Spain, I would say, "By the paséo!" which is only another way of saying "By the paved streets." But the difference between the two ways of saying it is the difference between the artist and the scientist. The latter concludes that they walk because the streets are paved; but the former surmises that they paved the streets because they like to walk.

Promenade, in France, is a feature of the life of cities. It does not descend to the small towns and villages. *Paséo*, in Spain, a thing altogether different in spirit from *promenade*, descends to the small country towns, but not to the villages.

And here, in Brihuega, it was over. There was a flavour of life and nourishment in the air that led us back to the hotel.

The hotel kept its promise of excellent smooth service without fuss. We were the only guests at the long table in the dining room—a dining room that had linoleum and mats and cats on the floor—and "the perfect waitress" waited on us. We knew that she must exist somewhere in the world, and, between us, we had long sought her in many countries until here, in Spain, at Brihuega, together we found her! A delightful child of no more than sixteen who performed the difficult work of waiting at table with the grace of Ganymede and the remoteness of Diana.

She had been trained, no doubt by the grouchy old patrona, in deftness and despatch, but in such a way that every movement was a natural combination of adequacy and restraint, while her self-possession had remained naïve yet intact. For not a thing did we have to ask; by not a second were we hurried over any course; yet not a second did we have to wait for dishes to be brought or removed. Prompt, silent, quaintly grave but obviously happy in her work, the little girl entered from a side room, always at the right moment, as if instinct, not observation, informed her when to come.

The privacy of that meal was complete. We loved the freshness of the little girl's presence, yet we felt neither her presence nor her observation as we dined and conversed. In such privacy, with any other waitress of engaging appearance, facetious talk and flirting would have been inevitable; but we found a deeper pleasure in this child's detached confidence than any light, familiar friendliness could have brought. She personified something in life—that continual daily rendering of service by so many unto others less worthy to be served. This we were able to acknowledge by an occasional "Gracias, señorita!"—a mere "Thank you!"—and she accepted it in silence.

No! The meal was not solemn—not in the least. There was nothing solemn about the waitress—she was attending, perfectly, to the wants of two utter strangers; a kind of occupation that she had stripped of its commonplace insincerities and superfluities down to its pleasing simplicity. Nor did she bring us under any spell of chaste and pure exaltation of spirit. We were enjoying a good meal, and we remained natural, masculine human beings. Very much so, for the influence of femininity was strong that night.

The main door of the dining room was open. Slowly along the hall came two young women of challenging loveliness. The light shone full on them as they passed by the doorway. Intense with character and beauty and brightness, they electrified us both, in their heedless passing. All the poise and radiance of healthy, independent womanhood; all the stimulating gracefulness of firm, unmated bodies; all the rich warmth and prelude of attraction, moved across the momentary space of the doorway—frame for a moment of life—and we braced taut with astonishment. "Who *are* those girls? Daughters of the patrona? Guests at the hotel?" But how were we to know who or what they were, we who were passing so rapidly—it seemed now—from place to place?

One of them came back, went past the doorway again, but did not look in. A dark girl, her crisp hair almost black, her skin dark and clear, her features handsomely regular, a creature of breeding. We heard the other one enter a room and shut the door behind her—that is, we thought it must be her. And with that, all evidence of their presence in the house disappeared. Not so our expectancy, but we never saw them again.

What with the perfect waitress, the disturbing presence of most desirable women in the house, and the cats in the dining room, the good meal itself made no fit impression on my memory. I recall that we were given slices of close bread, a detail remembered as the exceptional is always remembered, or at least mentally recorded, even under conditions of the most confusing excitement. Nowhere else in Spain had the bread been sliced. The cats, after the two young women had gone, were a distraction that accorded well with our alertness of mind. We were stimulated, ready to be interested in strange expressions of the joie de vivre. Two greedy, slothful cats, and one acrobat who behaved as I had never seen a cat behave before. He caught flies by leaping up at them and, so to speak, clapping his hands above his head; an active and strenuous performance which taught us how very long a live cat is when stretched out to its extreme limits.

After we left the dining room we were guilty of "hanging about" the corridors, the lounge rooms, and the landings of staircases. We went towards our room with a great slowness, reluctant with a great hope. Yet to what purpose? We might chance to have one more glimpse of the beauty of these girls, but what, more than that, could be possible?

And still, desire made us strongly hope for a miracle: that somehow the whole fabric of social behaviour might, for once, lose all significance; that two shabby, unknown pedestrians might be accepted at the value they placed upon themselves by two lovely, unknown women. Of course it was useless, romantically useless. We found ourselves going out to the café. And that was useless too—a café-load of men and smoke was a thing without meaning. We came back and went to bed. To sleep. Luckily, we were tired.

The morning came with a bright call of perfect weather. We had slept late but were in no hurry, for the walking day in Summer-Spain is long, and it was ten o'clock before we paid the most reasonable bill that was presented to us on the whole journey. Ten pesetas and fifty centimos we paid, for a night at the best managed hotel of any country town in any land. Oh, grouchy, laconic patrona, we sing your praises for a just and honest woman! Fairness is rare, the rarest thing in the world; and sanitary paper is rare in country towns. But in Brihuega—ah, Briganchester! All things there have quality. Brihuega is clean and excellent, and peace and beauty dwell there in retirement. Eymoutiers, Treignac, Brihuega —go ye there who seek a freshness of repose.

We bought cakes in the town, ostensibly for lunch, but we began to eat them as we climbed up the long, swinging tiers of the new road. There were gangs of men at work on the roadway who said "Buenos dias!" and from the ends of the ascending loops of road we looked down, and further down at Brihuega. After a mile of gentle winding we had climbed the three or four hundred feet up to the top of the plateau, and by that time you were able to announce: "*Monsieur de Bergerac, the cakes are eaten.*"

Hungrily, the bare land stretched before us.

Our direction lay now to the west-south-west, across the same limestone plateau of yesterday, which quickly began to assert its character of yesterday. Only for several miles was the land bare. The holm oaks gradually mustered around us again, until, within an hour of leaving Brihuega, they had so deepened that we were passing through a real forest, much more extensive and of stouter, bigger trees, than what we had called forests yesterday. And the country was more broadly undulating than yesterday so that, from the top of an occasional rise, we could see far forested hillsides through the trees, and a flat swell of the land to the north, the Monte de Encinas, Mountain of Holm Oaks.

From one rise we saw a large and unbeautiful château among the trees away to the right which we mistook for the palace shown as hereabouts on the map—the Palacio de Ibarra, the country seat of some distinguished person, we supposed. In a few minutes we were opposite the gateway of its private drive, where servants' quarters, shuttered and very shabby, stood like scales on the husk of grandeur, or at least of opulence, departed.

A mile beyond here was a small and lonely post of the civil guard. A fat, bareheaded guardia strolling in front of the building, and a lean woman leaning against the doorpost. The man returned our greeting pleasantly as we overtook him, and the woman smiled a "good morning." But we had gone hardly fifty yards past the place when we were stopped by an abrupt call of "Oiga!" The guardia had changed his mind about us.

Now, *oiga* is one of the most distensible words in Castilian. It can convey in its tone not only the exact shade of the speaker's mood and temper at the moment of speech, but also his frank and whole opinion of the listener.

The day I was in bed at Bujaraloz I overheard a conversation between the big guardia and the girl who was to be married, which revealed their true attitudes towards each other, their "private opinions" of each other, in its two opening words. They were simply:

THE GUARDIA: "*Oiga!*—Listen!"

THE GIRL: "*Oigo*—I'm listening."

His, the assertive, selfish insolence of the man who orders others about and expects them to wait on him. Hers, the scorn amounting almost to contempt of a person who has to wait on a moral inferior.

In this call to us we discerned that the guardia had no real doubt about us beyond a decision that he had better find out what we were doing. "Oiga!" for us, meant "Hey! You there! Just come back here a minute!" We went back, and something like the following conversation took place:

"Aren't you the two fellows I saw in the café yesterday?"

"Yes."

"Where are you going to?"

"Madrid."

"Where have you come from?"

"Paris."

"What papers have you?"

We handed him our passports, which he examined rapidly and returned to us without comment on them. His tone then became friendly, but was not inquisitive.

"Walked all the way?"

"Yes. We've been seven weeks on the road now."

"Enjoying it?"

"Immensely."

"Well—come inside and have a glass of wine before going on."

"Do you mind if we don't? We're not accustomed to wine like you Spaniards, and to drink it in the forenoon makes us drowsy."

"Don't mind in the least. Hope you like Madrid. Adiós!"

A pleasant fellow, and our conversation with him typical of our casual encounters with people along the road in Spain. They declared themselves openly, were only mildly inquisitive, satisfied with our answers, and of an even good-humour.

After we left the guardia the road sagged down into a broad hollow. There was supposed to be a stream at the bottom of it but we found no stream. We did, however, find a steam-roller, a perfectly new and shiny one, standing, or leaning, all by itself with no steam up, on the left of the road.

A steam-roller asleep in a forest is an uncommon sight, but this engine, to us, was a prodigy on account of its mere existence. We had now travelled eight hundred and sixty miles from Paris, and nowhere before, in the whole of that distance, had we seen a steam-roller. A rapid review of my past life and experience told me that most of the steam-rollers I had seen had been roaming in suburbs, which I had unconsciously assumed to be their *Wohnort* or habitat. I concluded, therefore, that places resembling suburbs must exist not many miles away from us, and probably ahead.

And near the steam-roller, but on the right, we passed the entrance to the park of the real Palacio de Ibarra, a park that was neither formal parkland, nor an enclosed part of the forest of holm oaks, but a dense pine wood that hid the palace from view.

So far we had been the only travellers on the road, but there now came towards us a long procession of what looked like the very people we had seen yesterday—the rough men, the stout women in tight bodices, the mules, the donkeys. Full of confidence, we greeted the leaders of the column in the proper manner, but, instead of beaming smiles and those phrases of simple fellowship that were so amicably spoken yesterday, we were met with a kind of resentful silence and stares of wonder. No—these were not the same people, nor even the same kind of people. It seemed that those who ride on asses towards Brihuega from the south of west—where suburbs lie—on Monday morning are less kindly disposed than others who ride out from Brihuega on asses into the north-east on Sunday afternoon. Henceforth, we would not speak first.

Not far beyond the place where this discourteous procession passed us the forest became thinner, opener, and the ground less undulating. Very soon we left the trees behind us and were walking through open ploughlands with a long, flat, unobstructed view before us.

There they were!—the telegraph line along the main road, not three miles away at the nearest, over to the right, but running aslant and away to where we would join them again, there, at Torija, the flat, grey town five miles ahead with the castle on its left, the place we had exchanged for Brihuega last night. And in the far distance, faintly dazzling in the morning sunlight, the long, snowy crestline of the Sierra de Guadarrama!

We drew on rapidly towards Torija, past fields of heavy land that had just been ploughed; past patches of wheatfield; and, unexpectedly, as we came nearer the town, past a few very poor looking vineyards not yet in leaf, the first vineyards we had seen in four days of travel. Where were the last? Between Terrer and Ateca, weren't they?

Time is short only when it is full. We marched along the tacky clay road for more than an hour between the edge of the forest and Torija, an empty, level hour. The closer we came to the town the more squalid it looked, so that we congratulated ourselves for having made the détour to Brihuega. Not even the square castle had the allurement of beauty that rises above beastliness. An ugly, flat place, Torija.

Quite close to it, on the right of the road, was a stone like a tombstone that bore a long inscription in Latin which we made no attempt to decipher. A little further on was a mediæval cross, like an English market cross, on the left. Dead, beautiful, learnèd ages! Latin—not the Latin of the Romans, but of sixteenth century Castile, when the culture of Spain was at its height. Latin—here, and at Brihuega. We were coming, surely, to the mature, intellectual Spain of Cervantes, Calderón, and Velazquez, now—at Torija. What an outpost!

At one stride we passed into the town and the road became a narrow street. Colour of Tiurana, of Cubélls, and a feeling as of damp walls, of things that would not dry. The street ended by joining another one that ran at right angles to it.

We stood at the junction to scan the dingy fronts of houses and shops, uncertain whether to buy lunch or to go to such a restaurant as this place might have. There were not many shops. We had noticed a bakery where several women were kneading dough, but the resources of the town seemed slight.

On the front of the house that looked straight down the street by which we had come was a modest sign, "Comidas," an announcement that corresponds exactly to your colloquial American term "eats." We asked a woman who was passing by if she could recommend the place, or was there a better, and she answered with simplicity that we could get a meal there but nowhere else.

"Shall we try it?"

"Yes—we'll try it. It's one o'clock and I'm hungry."

We entered the dirtiest interior that we were to see in Spain. Indeed, it was the only dirty house we found in Spain, on this journey or afterwards. Its condition was quite like things I had imagined before we came to Spain, in those days of mistaken belief when I used to think that Spain was a dirty country abounding in vermin and inhabited by debased people. Certainly, the mistaken belief, which I had acquired from others who knew no more about Spain than I knew myself, was not able to detract one particle of my secretly-nursed interest in the country—I went there ready to "put up with" vermin and dirt.

But, except for the pardonable fleas in the horse-rugs at Cubélls, and the almost pardonable ones in "la cama de nosotros" at Tiurana, the whole journey was clean. True, we sustained a crushing defeat by bed bugs at one place in Madrid, which forced us to change our lodgings immediately, but, of all the forty-seven different beds in which we slept in Spain (yes—I have checked the number with care and have included those beds you're probably thinking about), only three were "infected." It is possible to be less fortunate in Paris. Other people have told me true stories of Spanish vermin, particularly, I note, concerning Andalusia, but our general experience was neither one of vermin nor of dirt. Village streets are dirty—muddy, rather—and there are heaps of refuse, and smells in some places, but we found village houses and the beds of village inns to be commendably clean.

And, while I am talking of beds to the advantage of Spain, let me remind you that there were only three places in Spain where we had to share the same bed—an interesting part of that *sufficiency* of Spanish things of which I have spoken before. At so many places in France there was only one bed, usually an uncomfortable one; or, if there were two, one was likely to be a cot so short that a person of Anglo-Saxon tallness could not sleep in it. Of course the French would say "We make our beds long enough for ourselves, and why should we bother about the length of foreigners?" And why should they? Nevertheless, had the British manufacturers of beds, who have done so well in Spain, bothered about the length of foreigners, they might possibly have increased their wealth and prosperity by selling many beds in France, difficult though it is to persuade French people to buy things. But Spaniards, are, fortunately for us, longer than Frenchmen, and Spain understands an austere, yet sufficient, kind of comfort and is clean—except at Torija.

The room we had entered had a floor of stamped earth and was filled with ungainly articles of lumber, untidily piled, and so covered with dust, cobwebs, and rust, as to show that nothing had been moved, perhaps for years. There were old garden tools, broken furniture, mouldering sacks, and, I remember, a useless grindstone. We went to the foot of the shaky, wooden stairway at the inner end of this store-room, and called out, to attract the attention of whoever might be on the floor above.

A middle-aged woman came to the head of the stairs and peered down at us. She was dressed in shabby black, was slight but not thin, and was evidently an alert and active person. Her figure, and the contour of her face—which was very brown, and wrinkled like soft, grained leather—were good. The very dark complexion and the bright, rich brownness of her large eyes reminded me strongly of a Sydney lady whom I do not like; but this Spanish woman had different hair, greying hair that had been deep walnut in colour, and, if loosely done in a plain knot on top, it was rather becoming and not too untidy. Possibly this account of the señora flatters her. Add to it, however, a suspicion that her hands were not clean; an impression that she was far from "particular." "Good morning, señora! We want lunch. Can you serve it to us?"

"Yes—if you pay." This was the reply of Torremocha del Campo, given without hesitation, as a simple statement of conditions, and without offence in the tone. "Certainly, we'll pay—beforehand, if you wish."

She came half-way downstairs, and with frank liveliness explained—"No! No! I don't mean that. I only want to be sure that you *will* pay. Two other foreigners came here for lunch, and after they'd eaten everything they refused to give me a penny more than one peseta, which wasn't paying at all." (We suspected the Poles—groundlessly.) "So, you see, I have to be careful. I'll tell you exactly what you can have and what it'll cost, so that you can say *beforehand* if it's too dear.

Without stopping, she gave a quotation for lunch, telling it off item by item on her fingers—meat, potatoes, lettuce, eggs, bread, olive oil, wine, coffee—and then stated the total cost, four pesetas. Would that do? Would we be satisfied?

"That will do splendidly, señora."

"Then come upstairs and sit down. You'll have to wait a little as I have to send out for some of the things."

Upstairs was dirtier than downstairs. A large and ancient kitchen with the kind of low hearth we had seen at Bujaraloz and Torremocha. We sat on a bench against the wall, a bare table in front of us, and the patrona went out for a few minutes to despatch messengers. Dirt! On the floor, on the pots and pans, on everything, it seemed. Not really so, however. The table was clean enough and so were other used surfaces. The crockery on the dresser was clean too. But confusion, slatternly untidiness, extended from the heap of old ashes at the back of the hearth to the furthest corners of two neighbouring rooms into which we could see. This house had been "let go," or, work had "got ahead of" the mistress.

She came in briskly, sat down on a low stool in front of the hearth, and proceeded at once to prepare the fire and to talk volubly. Her speech was so rapid that we understood, and badly, less than half of it. She assumed that we were listening and interested, and treated us in the friendliest way, as if she had known us all our lives. We asked about the foreigners who had refused to pay for their lunch—was it yesterday?

"Oh, no! That was a long time back—perhaps a year ago." So it was not the Poles. But she remembered it with voluptuous wrath, and we listened to a discourse on the wickedness of those foreigners until a little girl with curly hair ("the daughter of a neighbour, señores") came in with eggs, olive oil, and a report that there was no meat. Very well. Then, would the señores accept fried pork? They would, gladly.

The patrona worked quickly, in no way retarded by her ceaseless and quite energetic discourse. We were soon eating an excellent omelette—a tortilla francesa—and the pork lay sizzling in olive oil. A boy of about twelve then came in, bringing two heads of lettuce.

The patrona decisively interrupted our downcast attention to the omelette by asking—

"Aren't you going to speak? He addressed you," meaning the quiet, intelligent boy. She said it not as a person casting a reflection on our manners but as one drawing attention to what we had not perceived, and would have given such a warning as "Look! Your coat's on fire!" in the same firm but quite unemotional tone.

We made friends with the boy—her son—at once, and he it was who first understood why we wanted glasses for the wine. He got them for us. We had not seen a "spouted carafe" (a *porrón*) since we left Fraga, but they used one here, and the yellow wine it contained was good. I wonder if vino tinto, black and opaque as ripe blackberries, could possibly be served in a "spouted carafe"? And is that why we saw only this one such vessel on the meseta? Wine of a deep honey-colour looks well inside a bright glass vessel, but black wine is fitting to crystal glass only in small volume.

Pork and potatoes fried in olive oil were far better than we expected them to be. The flavour and odour of the hot oil contradicted all the things that are said about "that oily Spanish and Italian cookery." The patrona was very concerned to find us using the same plates for the meat as for the omelette, but when we maintained that we intended to use them for the salad too—because unnecessary washing-up is a stupidity—she decided that we were, after all, rather sensible people. And the salad, which followed without delay, was crisp and fresh. Not even the bread gave occasion for criticism of the meal.

While coffee was being made a young man and a woman with a baby came in and were introduced as daughter, grandchild, and son-in-law. There were now eight in the gathering, but only the patrona talked. We learnt that there was an invalid in the house—her husband, we thought—and that the daughter and son-in-law had come to visit him. There was much said about a son who was in Africa, doubtless in the Riff Campaign, but whose son it was impossible to guess. The fact, however, was of great importance to the household.

We had no doubt, by now, that the patrona was struggling against adversity and a confusion of things that had beaten her physical efforts but not her spirit. A woman who was doing what she could, and, concerning the many things she could not do, she was not disposed to worry. To complain was not her way, but to talk with energy was a release that made us, new people, listeners, the creators of an opportunity for refreshing volubility.

They were a pleasing group in that kitchen, where we spent more than an hour and a half; and when, after friendly farewells, we left them, we felt that lunch at Torija had been one of the entertaining incidents of the journey.

Outside, we turned to the right, the south, and at the end of the street came to the castle. A square structure with turreted corners and the vestiges of a low, square tower, but otherwise a mere hollow, roofless box of whitish-yellow stone. It had been effectively destroyed, suffered the general fate of castles, and the eastern wall had been almost completely torn away. It had, however, the air of a thing in which some pride is taken—a clean ruin, cleared of all loose stone and rubbish—and on the tidy, smooth square of gravelly sand inside it, children were playing a ball game.

A castle, at Torija! Castles used to be built only at places where the ground itself has tactical, defensive value. Towns also are built —or grow—where the ground, or even the country, has a critical significance for life. Approaching Torija from the north of east we had seen nothing to suggest why a castle or a town should exist there on that open, level expanse of ploughland. But a town is an opaque thing. The eye that views it across the level distance is held by the town's mass, and gazes not beyond it, sees nothing of what is on the far side.

We passed through Torija into the castle, where our attention was held. We stepped out of the castle on to the brink of a low, abrupt cliff, and found ourselves gazing straight down a small, descending, gradually opening valley that holds the main road to Madrid. The castle, Torija, are at the valley's head.

This, then, is the edge, the margin; the end and the beginning of different things. Down the valley the aspect of the world is new to us. It is not as yesterday, nor as any day before. Down there is the way to a life that is different, and the beginning of the difference is here. And here is the end of the way and the manner of life that lies behind us, an end that is the beginning of the end of our own journey, the end of uncontaminated rural things. Here endeth *the* *country*, the simple civilised earth of crops and flocks and herds; of simple buying and selling; of lives that grow straight from the soil or from handling the very product of the soil. Here endeth nature's freedom of the hills, the forests, the grass, and the streams, where whatsoever groweth, groweth to be itself, be it little town or little weed in the ploughed furrow. Here, of all that in its earthy purity, is the end. The body's world.

For down there, down the valley, the aspect of the land is tame. The land itself is tame.

Torija stands "between."

(*b*) *The Sphere of Cities*

"La vieille Chine est morte."
Claudel.

Once more, and not to leave it now until our journey's end, we were on the main road. An accustomed way resumed; familiarity of width and surface-curvature; the monotonous precision of interval and height in the old right-hand rhythm of the telegraph poles.

From Zaragoza until yesterday-so-long-ago the poles had counted time and distance more insistently than milestones. They stitched the seam of tiny, running minutes of our journey until we became no more conscious of their perfect regularity than of the beating of our hearts, when, suddenly, they were no longer there. That was yesterday. We had left the main road and were walking in the strange silence of a machine that has ceased to run. The interval had been quiet as a ship at sea when the engines stop and the hull no longer quivers. But now, with the poles once more beside us, we heard them again, the resumption of a passing whir of habit. Soon we would get used to them and notice them no more.

A steep, rough track had led us down to the road, which lay not quite at the bottom of the valley's furrow but was held by a stone wall and an embankment to the western side, low down. And rapidly it fell, in a long decline of the opening valley.

We had not gone far before we had to stop, to admire a score of young women and girls of Torija who were leaning in a row, bare of head and arm, over the far side of a long, communal laundry-trough at the foot of the embankment. Pretty girls in a bright setting, and, as they were facing us, a few of them ceased working to look up and see what we would do. Out came the camera—you always know exactly what to do!

When had we last seen a level sheet of water? This big, oblong trough of stone held one that shelved in depth towards us from the ledge on the other side, where the girls kept it in the state of foaming agitation of a beach. There was a current through the tank, and a small cascade fell over a spillway at the downhill end, but the surface remained a flat dazzle, broken by lazy swirls of glistening darkness. Flat, beside the tilted roadway; flat, in the rough hollow of the valley-head; an unaccustomed levelness.

The valley bottom behind the girls was a strip of green lawn, tilted lengthwise to rhyme with the roadway. On it they had spread white sheets and garments to dry in the sun. Behind it rose a grassy slope of little pastures divided by stone walls and bushy hedges; then, the steep, rough slope of stony valleyside, bearing a straggle of slim, yielding trees; then, behind all and looking down on all, the castle. There were freshness and glitter, hardness and age and labour, in this crumbling dazzle of whitish stone, this green, reposing heaviness of grass and hedge, in the top-heavy touzle of the trees, in the clean exclamation of the outspread linen, the mobility of the rank of women, and the oblong flash of water in the tank. And smiles—smiles of farewell, as we turned to go onward, down the road.

Very quickly the road became an avenue of old elms. There were stone benches at intervals between the trees, and for some hundreds of yards there were flimsy booths along the roadside where pastry, sweets, fruit, and soft drinks could be bought. At the door of one booth stood a half-witted girl—you have told me that I never fail to notice deformity and mental derangement—and that part of the avenue felt as busy and as worn to custom as if it were on the outskirts of a city. It was cool, mature, and the very trees were aged. It was, in fact, old and civilised. A mile or so of road, far out in a small Castilian valley. Traffic strained up the slope towards Torija; a car passed, going downward; gangs of men were threading a festooned entanglement of bright copper wire to the green glass cups of the telegraph line.

The stone wall and embankment had dwindled to a low bank of earth on the left, and along the mid-line of the narrow lawn of the bottom rose a wall of young trees. A tiny brook ran in continual hiding between their feet. Green, green and shady, this moist, descending corridor, and cool, in the shade of cultivated, planted things.

And this trickle of water that we could hear, flowing from the laundry tank below Torija, flowing down from weak springs out of the rock from under Torija itself, was a sign. It was the first water to flow beside us towards the Henares. True, at Saúca and at Torremocha del Campo we had crossed brooks that belong to the headwaters of the Henares, but the road led away from them, up on to the easier tops that divide the waters of the Henares from those of the Tajuña.

It is the habit of roads to forsake the windings of the upper segments of valleys in favour of the more easily traversable divides; and of railways to remain in the upper parts of valleys, because they cannot easily climb to the divides. The "way," however, from Madrid to Zaragoza, is controlled by the Henares and the Jalón, and this nameless brook that runs down from Torija—it was too small even to be shown on our map, though it has been added to the later edition—was leading us now towards an inevitable line of movement, the Henares itself.

As the funnel of our small valley widened, the road ever descending, the view ahead more and more amply filled its enlarging frame. The forms of hills to the right-front were good, and that way the landscape steadily opened. More abrupt, the accompanying steep to the left, and it remained the nearer. There were many trees. The right-hand hills were almost wooded in places, and the cultivated feeling of the district was heightened suddenly, when we came to olive groves—the first we had seen since we left el Frasno, six days ago.

The telegraph line disputed with trees for possession of the roadside, and, in this active stringing of the wires, the trees were suffering in a way that made us indignant. Sycamores, locusts, and a tree unknown to us lined the road on the right, but instead of carrying the telegraph across to the left the authorities had erected it close to the trees. In order to leave the wires clear, the lower boughs of tree after tree had been wantonly hacked and broken off, the trees ruined in appearance, and the life of some of them endangered.

This ruthless and incompetent pruning had not been done by men who understood and appreciated trees—naturally, it had not—but by men who were overpowered by a respect for the grace and loveliness and paramount urgency of telegraph lines, up-to-date-men of action, who tolerate no sentimental nonsense. "Easily grow more trees on the other side of the road, but this line goes *right through*, and nothing's going to stop it—understand?" Of course they are right! The shareholders, who will never come to this valley, are impatient for the first dividend.

A superintendent of lines was directing one gang, where the filamentous purity of curvature of loosely hanging threads of wire was being drawn, strained, raised to less exquisite tautness. Yes! There is a poetry of telegraph lines no less profound than that of trees, but let it not, Mr. unpoetic modern man, do harm to that of trees.

A car in distress made us ungenerously hope that a telegraphic vandal was suffering inconvenience, but it was the car that had passed us near Torija. A man in city clothes got out and walked down the road. We paced him, and found him ridiculous out here on a country road in New Castile. His light shoes quickly began to feel uncomfortable, and his aura turned the vermilion of disgust.

By hundreds of thousands we, his like, dwell together in cities. Generation after generation we have done so, until now, the abundant earth that sustains us, and its ways, are forgotten. Put any of us out alone, to sustain himself by his own resource, and that resource would quickly fail. Some grow sweet-peas and others grow cabbages in the little suburban back yards and allotments, but which of us could raise the year's crop of staple grain and fibre, rear the beasts, and build secure shelter, and weave comfort out of toil and skill, unaided?

The question is absurd? Not at all. The simplest unforeseen may blight our anthills beyond cure of science and engineering. The mortality would be high, and, on the whole, beneficial. God's shares would rise in value—they always do in a desperate emergency, when the most sensible and rational people are forced to discover that they do firmly believe in him—and time would resume its proper worth, effort find its worthy expenditure, and books like this would no longer be written, for people would no longer require that others live part of their lives for them.

We followed the incongruous, tailor-made gentleman down as far as Valdenoches, an untidy village of low houses that lay across the fields half a mile to the left of the road. He went there, hoping, most likely, to find a telephone.

We, on the other hand, were drawn by an isolated row of old houses that lined a cart-track parallel to the road, an outlier of Valdenoches. There were placards on the end house, to encourage the thirsty. It was warm, and we hoped for coffee rather than wine, but were overjoyed to find good beer of two kinds.

The dark little bar was cool with a mouldy coolness, and the fat, slow, and creaking patrona offered us the choice of common ale or of home-made lemon beer that looked very professionally bottled and labelled. I chose the former, you the latter, and we declared them both to be excellent draughts. There was a noise of children playing rowdily in an inner room, which ceased at once when the old woman called shrilly, nasally, "Ni-ñas!—Now girls!" We were amused by that same call a week or so later. The girls came obediently into the bar, a comely daughter and a younger child, and the patrona went back into the house. As soon as she had gone the noisy play began again, and the shrill call came at once, "Ni-ñas! Niii-ñas!" automatically, a habit of response to any show of exuberance the girls might make. We carried our glasses and bottles outside and sat on a bench in the shade of the wall.

Valdenoches over there—a shabby place, like Torija as we had seen it from the east. But beyond the cart-track the damp, white linen of Valdenoches lay spread on a lawn, with that effect of clean brightness which the French call *éclatant*. Evidently, Monday was washing day in New Castile just as in Sydney.

A very small child was playing by himself on the edge of the cart-track, playing with the dirt. A horseman came riding leisurely up the track from below. We were not talking, were not doing anything but drink our beer and gaze abstractedly at the scene before us, when something almost instantaneous happened. Our heads turned, yours, mine, to look in the same direction. Simultaneously, I gave an amused laugh, and you uttered an extraordinary cry of anger and resentment and sprang to your feet. I saw only an infant that had capsized into a clumsy, ridiculous posture like a baby bear, and a decent-looking fellow on a mule who had just ridden past the child. But—your burst of anger? Yes, the child was crying. What had eluded me on the edge of that second?

You, believing, I felt, that we had both seen the whole train of quick action, condemned me, and would make only an assertive and accusing report of what you thought I too must have seen.

The man, you said, had deliberately ridden the child down, and was pleased with his success in having capsized it. Revelation, this, of cold cruelty. One flash, that pierced into the nature of Spain, where there are lurking devils. What Frenchman, Englishman, German, would so play the cad in public and ride off with that air of amusement, satisfaction, and security? Spain! To have seen it once (we were to see something like it on another occasion) brings conviction that it is there, deeply hidden, rarely to be witnessed, but there.

The child, luckily, was unhurt in body, but children remember shocks of fear.

Had our courage been as ready as our indignation we'd have dragged that creature off his mule and beaten him—and most women who read this will want to tell us so.

We went sullenly down the cart-track to the road, into opener country, where we slowly calmed and adjusted our confused feelings, and dissolved your doubt of me, by abusing the work of the line-gangs.

There were more trees whose boughs had been lopped unmercifully, meek, feminine, locust trees. At one place we saw the men at work, hacking the boughs off to make room for the wires, so that a row of trees looked as if it had been rabbeted on one side. But what could such men care? Yet, why had not the authority of the province of Guadalajára decreed safety for the trees? Trees are not so numerous in Spain that their beauty and infrequent shade can be aught but precious.

For more than a mile along that part of the road there was other evidence, too, of the wantonness of persons. There were sharp lumps and splinters of green glass dangerously scattered over the roadway. It seemed that every monkey who climbed the poles to attach green insulating cups to the cross-ties had amused himself by hurling the spoilt and unserviceable ones at the roadway, instead of dropping them straight down on to the grass beneath him—where, of course, they would not break in so entertaining a manner. How you, who have had to change punctured tyres, enjoyed your wrath as we walked along the glass-strewn road!

The afternoon had become oppressive, and at five o'clock we halted by a bridge where the tiny stream ran under the roadway to depart from us. Its high, steep banks of red clay cut the grassy surface short, with artificial, temporary neatness—grass, long, thin, open grass to the very edge, and the brook itself in a toy gorge, ten feet down. A low place, this, and, indeed, much lower than we were aware or would have believed at the time.

Actually, we were here on a level with the very bottom of the gorge of the Tajuña at Brihuega! So easily and evenly had the road descended from Torija to Valdenoches that it had brought us down more than seven hundred feet in those five miles. And so gently had the valley opened out, so gradually had the landscape spread further and further to the right, so sympathetically had the hill-tops of the escarpment to the left become lower as the road descended, that we had not noticed our quick translation down to a lower world than the one behind. In the forty-two miles between Alcolea del Pinar and Torija we had come down no more than seven hundred and twenty-five feet; but in the short five miles just behind us we had come down nearly the same distance. A rapid and powerful change.

Yet in spite of it we were still high up in the world, over two thousand feet above sea level, and were to descend very little more in the remainder of our journey. Madrid, now only sixty-four kilometres—forty miles—away to the south-west,was only about two hundred feet lower than Valdenoches. The undulating distance between us and Madrid would be nearly level.

Why was this lower country more fertile than the loftier north-eastern extent of the province? Why does Guadalajára, the city, an eccentric focus, lie near the south-western boundary of its province? Obviously, there are more people in the south-west, many more. But the reason for these things is not a simple one. It is involved, I believe, with the distribution of rainfall, and ultimately, with the Sierra de Guadarrama. Where was the sierra? We had lost sight of it in the descent to this low place whence we could not see across the western hills.

And while we sat there, as if to prove to us that there is more rain in the lower south-west than in the higher north-east of the province, the clouds of a thunderstorm gathered in splendid, black anger over Torija, and drifted with the muttering weight of the Deluge towards us. The sun shone, as if with a stronger flare of defiance, behind us, and a blithe motor lorry, the telephone company's truck, came along from Guadalajára and passed in a spirited noisy dash, towards the storm.

But the storm divided, wedged in two by the straight evening sunlight, and drifted in masses of subsiding celestial colic to right and left. A dissipating spray of purged rainfall quickened the brightness of red and purple on bare, south-eastern hills. In a few heavy minutes of swift motion the storm had gathered, developed, and had *raté*—missed fire. We rose to go, and found ourselves climbing a flattish hill.

Taracena, the next village, was notable because it united the main highway from Soria and Logroño with our own, and thus knotted the strand of threads from the upper Ebro and remote Navarre to the web of new Castile, to draw them to Madrid. It was a neat place, composed, it seemed, of nothing but cervecerías—beer-gardens—where coffee was unobtainable. It had the air of a collection of summer-houses to which people might drive out, on warm evenings, to refresh themselves languidly—for close over the hills was Guadalajára.

We wondered, as we climbed up a long slope, if the city bore any resemblance to its "opposite number" in Mexico. Was the original the larger or the smaller, the less or the more beautiful of the two? And why, when there are native names, do colonists of all nations choose to christen their young settlements after places at home? For thousands of names in Spain there are corresponding names in Hispanic America. Córdoba—which one, Spain or Argentina? For thousands of names in Britain there are corresponding names in North America, Australia, New Zealand. The Dutch too have done the same thing—Nieuw Zealand, Nieuw Holland, Nieuw Amsterdam. Is it home-sickness, pride and compliment, fear of new things, or just lack of imagination?

In this approach to the city, the country was beginning to feel like a garden, a commonplace, untidy garden, somewhat dry and dusty.

When we got to the top of the hill we were able to see Guadalajára itself, in a spread of subdued landscape that looked like the edge of an open shell whose hinge-line was the distant crest of the Sierra de Guadarrama. At the bottom of the hill the city formed an ill-defined knot in a light confusion of trees, and there spread outward from it a diminishing halo, a more and more thinly scattered sprawl of habitations. One bright and ugly thing stood up aggressively in the dullness, about a mile to the east of the city; a cube, obviously new and hollow, of raw red brick surmounted by a prolate dome of hot, burnished copper. A dominating architectural failure. It appeared to be the mortuary chapel of a big cemetery, and, perched as it was in an open place near the top of a long slope that led straight down to the city, it looked insecure, as if it might get dislodged and become a ball of fire to roll down on Guadalajára.

The long, straight road downhill became a shady avenue where children were playing on the grass between the trees. Quickly, however, it turned into a jerky, interrupted faubourg where we attracted attention. But we didn't care. Like the copper dome, we ourselves had only a neutral equilibrium, and we felt that we were rolling rapidly down the slope to hit the side of Guadalajára with a bump at the right-angled bend of the road at the bottom.

Certainly, we stopped at the elbow, and we found yellow dog-roses in the tangle of roadside brambles there. It was a cool, moist, green corner, right under the cliff of a long, dignified building that should have been a college but was actually a brewery.

Guadalajára sits astride of the lower, western end of a long, humped bluff that pushes its nose into the river, the Henares. The site is one that used to have military advantages, for the approach of an enemy from up or down the valley could be smelt from afar; and, as the enemy would almost certainly be on the other side of the river, the shelving, western side where movement is easy, the higher ground of the spur with the river curving around its end was a troublesome place to attack but not a difficult one to defend. The Moors understood that aspect of its importance perfectly.

The main road turns sharply to the right, the west, at the bottom, where we stood admiring dog-roses, and it sweeps in a long level curve around the contour of the bluff, with city buildings up the slope and green vale and scattered houses below, as if it were following the line of demolished fortifications.

Guadalajára encrusts its hill like a bent shield, strongly outlined by curving roadway all around, and its axis is the long, bisecting ridge of the spur, which bears the main internal thoroughfare. An elongated, symmetrical place. And on this account we had the choice of entering the city by a side door—any one of the ribbed streets leading up and across the spur—or by the front door, which is at the tip of the spur, near the river. We chose the front door, walked a mile north-eastward, then turned sharply to walk south-westward up and into the city.

In spite of its importance and size, the place had not the feeling of a city. It felt suburban, garishly, amateurishly so, as if its bright little boot shops and provision stores were striving, like the shops of a railway suburb, for the distinction of smart shops "in town." Of defined and unified character it had none. Of maturity it had nothing. It looked, not new, but ineffectively modernised.

Ever since we saw it from the hilltop this interpretation had been forming in me—that Guadalajára looks not like a city but like a fragment of a metropolitan suburb that has detached itself from a larger mass and drifted off into the open. Somewhere here, I thought, the steam-roller of the oak forest will have its kennel. (How lost it must feel, our there!) Brihuega, Ariza, Calatayud, have more of an unconscious urban atmosphere in them. We gave the prize to Guadalajára, Mexico, a place we had not seen, but—surely?

Let it not be assumed that this is a ready and thorough condemnation of Guadalajára, Spain. There are beauty and novelty, life, activity, and a significant vitality in the place. It has vigour, persistent vigour, and, at the time of our visit, was garrisoned so strongly with infantry that it seemed to be living with militant purpose. It is ancient as any city in this part of Spain, but has lost nearly all trace of its antiquity through persistent modification of its appearance—which is not quite the same thing as rebuilding. Within the conservative plan of its streets there are many buildings two or three centuries old, very few that are older, but a great many that are much younger.

Our most pressing need, however, was not to understand Guadalajára but to find a cheap hotel. The only one we saw was a pretentious edifice in the centre of the city. We passed it by, went further up the street, and entered a large café where we sat by an open window to drink coffee and consider what to do. It was about a quarter to seven, bright and sunny. As usual, there would be plenty of time.

What a comfortable retreat for men that café was! Lofty, cool, quiet, plain with the plainness of good, sufficient things. Brown wood and brown leather, for easy relaxation of the body that induces freedom of the mind.

It foreshadowed the huge yet intimate cafés of Madrid, most civilised of crowded retreats, where all men know that conversation between friends is one of the vital arts, and where all men curb the tongue when the more urgent, still more vital idiom of music admits them to another dimension of being. Do you remember the unfortunate couple who came into a café on the Gran Via in Madrid one night while the orchestra was playing? They will never do so again! Nowhere, under no other conditions, have I found myself so ready to listen, so fit to receive good music, as in those cafés of Madrid, where the people knew that music is not a decoration nor a mere entertainment, but a necessary part of life to the informed existence, a need, like love, and nourishment.

There was no music in this café of Guadalajára at so early an hour, but there were peace and seclusion that were not disturbed nor invaded even by the four fat priests who drank beer and ate welsh rabbit at a neighbouring table. They didn't think much of us, nor we of them, and, once noticed, they faded into the impersonal background while we drank slow coffee and watched the life of the street through the window.

Life of the town, the army, and the church. Business men, clerks, errand boys; well-dressed women who were shopping, and handsome girls who were marketing; sturdy, common soldiers, off parade, who looked at the girls with an appraising certainty of hope; groups of smart, capable young men from an officers' training corps, neither officers nor soldiers, in the badgeless anonymity of their well-cut whipcord tunics—"officer pups," I called them, to your amusement; and officers themselves, dressed very like British officers of the War. One officer of gorgeously high rank stirs a continuous, dull rattle of salutes around him as he passes down the long street. It reminds me of the effect of looking through a picket fence at the spokes of a passing wheel. The clergy, in black soutane under wide, flat brims of ruffled felt, move or halt, in occasional knots of two, three, four—animated dumb-bells, triangles, quadrilaterals, that look to their own centres and are conscious of no external existence. Automobiles pass up or down, not very often, and look like elephants in alleys; mule carts; carriages. Bent old gentlemen of the retired classes, old ladies who have incomes, old women who have not; shrill, ragged children, like shooting stars; workmen with ladders, boys with parcels. Many people gaze through the window, slow down, stare at us, then pass on. We are strange to them as they are to us.

For centuries we have walked across the hills, and time beats here with an unaccustomed measure, pours abundance through a vortex of locality with vibrations of such rumbling fixity that they shake our habit of progression. But we move, we pass, from place to place, onward. These people circulate in one place, inward and outward. We obey the same nocturnal ebb of tide as do they, but we are undrawn by the little whirlpool here. We are in the linear drag of a stronger and more distant power.

We watched the opposed streaming of street life with the fascination of new arrivals in Heaven or Hell or Hindustan, until we remembered that we must find lodging for the night. How to do so? We took counsel of the mozo—the waiter—and he provided us with a guide, a ragged little boy of about ten, who was to lead us to posadas.

The first place was full. At the second they studied us with doubt, and then decided that it too was full. From the third we ourselves withdrew, from odours that dissolve the confidence of seekers after habitation. By this time we had walked through many side streets of Guadalajára and were standing in a small square with the little boy telling us that he could remember no more posadas.

An officer, who noticed the group, came smartly across the square and questioned the little boy in sharp tones. He then turned to us, and, in the same incisive, direct way, asked what we were doing. As soon as he heard our brief explanation that we were foreign excursionistas looking for cheap lodging for the night, he spoke to us in perfect French and became charming.

He was a slightly built man of younger middle-age, with a firm, energetic slenderness about him that expressed itself graciously even in his sharpness of manner, which was not in the least overbearing. His clean-shaven face was minutely pock-marked, but remained pleasing in spite of that—a neat, balanced, clear face, deeply tanned. I concluded that he was a captain, an active and intelligent one, whose company would be smartly drilled, properly clothed and fed, unpampered, and loyal. "What?" he asked, "You're *walking* from Paris to Madrid? Mais c'est très couragaux, ça! —That's a capital thing to do!—As for lodgings, I can't recommend the posadas here, and there's only one place in town where fellows like yourselves would care to go. It's neither very good nor very expensive, but it's really the only place. Shall I tell the boy to take you there?"

We thanked him, and were led at once to that pretentious building we had dismissed as too expensive when we came into the city. "Es aquí, señores," said the little boy—"This is the place," and as soon as he had pocketed his tip he vanished.

Hotel. Impersonal. "Room with two beds? Yes. Please sign the register and fill in these forms. Porter! Show the gentlemen to number twenty-eight. Your key, sir." The formula of every city in the world.

Number twenty-eight was a big room overlooking a shrunken court, and was heavily decorated in the worn and faded red of a tarnished and spurious grandeur. Shadow of the public counterfeit that is offered—in hotels, ships, theatres, shops, conveyances, institutional buildings, even in food!—to the innocence of modern democracies, for the same as that private elegance of surroundings which cultivated societies create so naturally and inevitably for themselves. The bastard elegance of *cabines de luxe* and "Louis Quartorze suites" had, in this room, a thin, exhausted echo. No prodigality of the American gesture of luxury here. " Strawberries for the multitude! (And let them be large ones, drowned in cream!)" may never become a popular kind of cry in Spain. But the germs of the same derangement of values were in this room.

"Well—only one night to spend in it. And meanwhile, suppose we shave?"

. . . .

"You got the razor strop in your pack, A.?"

"No."

"Where the devil is it then? It's not in mine."

"I must regretfully inform you that last night, when I saw it last, it was hanging from the knob of your bedpost at Brihuega."

"Well dammit, why didn't you *inform* me at Brihuega?"

"Max, you'll go to the christening and forget to take the child."

"No child to take, so far as I'm aware."

"Possibly. But ship another blade, and we'll learn to buy a razor strop in Spanish when we get to Madrid. Hustle, so's we can go out."

Late sunlight. The façade of an ancient palace, looking down over an open flank of garden that breaks the line of buildings on the southern side of the main street, is boldly illuminated with it. The Palacio del Infantado, as I learnt much later. Heavy diamond-heads of stone stand out in hard, regular relief from the expanse of wall, like giant bolt-heads. The uppermost storey, sumptuously ornate with moulded pillars, traced arches, and mudéjar patterns in both high and low relief, has a half-round balcony before each of its six, canopied windows. The straight ripple of tiled eaves throws a sharp, narrow band of shadow that solders the flat roof to the façade, and the whole palace looks shabbily brilliant in the resinous, brittle sunshine. We discover that the classical windows of the middle storey were pierced long after the completion of the building, and at once their rectilinear slenderness looks alien to the impure unity of a Gothic that became arabesque. Over the arched entrance a blazon of arms, presumably of the Mendoza family, adheres to the wall like a great seal of nobility. Had we entered this building we would have found an exuberance of beauty rich as any in Spain, but the palace reared itself in proud rejection of the city, and we walked on, uphill.

Shops are of the Guadalajára of to-day. Already, in our earlier movements through the city, we had noticed them, small, good shops with an imposing display of wares behind their glittering windows. The retail of leather goods, of saddlery, harness and footwear, seemed to be an important branch of business. And there were whole windows full of the canvas shoes with rope soles that we had seen first at Séo de Urgél, *alpargatas*, I think they call them.

But the shops which really astonished us were the fish shops. A fresh profusion of marine fish, lobsters, shrimps, shell-fish, sea-urchins, and even of octopods, in the heart of a lofty plateau, seemed unnatural to us. But we were to learn that all kinds of supposedly edible creatures of the deep are sent up, from Biscay, the Atlantic, and the Mediterranean, to Madrid and other inland cities of the meseta in great quantity, by a well-organised system of supply. Do you remember the tolerant wonder of the waiter at Salamanca when we asked him to take away the dish of chopped octopus tentacles? Black, elastic, slimy, and steaming with an odour of sickly Hell-broth! The waiter assured us that it was very good—and brought us something else. The zoological variety of display in Spanish fish shops has, however, an æsthetic attraction—of odour, lustre, colour, form, mass, and arrangement; strong, almost, as the brilliant attraction of fruit shops in London, or of greengrocery stores in North Carolina. But of shops in Guadalajára we would learn more to-morrow.

We walked slowly uphill to the higher end of the city, past some large permanent barracks to a park or garden that extends down the northern slope of the spur. There were many dusty flower beds there, and a limited abundance of daisies, chrysanthemums, pansies, and stocks, and a white, wax-like flower unknown to us. A median alley of horse-chestnuts sheltered two rows of what we agreed were the most deplorable statues we had ever seen. We sat on a stone bench in the shade, with our backs to the statues, and allowed a beggar to worry us for five minutes that he might feel that he had earned his alms. People filtered slowly into the park from all sides, as the day sank to coolness and long shadows, and it seemed a pity to have to brace the relaxation of so calm an evening for the sake of dinner at an hotel.

It was a flavourless meal. There were many officers and a few women in the dining room, and they all seemed bored, though politely shocked at our appearance. The waiter was bored, indifferent, dilatory, and the soup and meat were nearly cold. We had one flicker of interest when a course of cold fish was served—thick slices of a large fish called merluza—hake, surrounded by a salad of chopped onion, tomato, and chile. Had we known that merluza, hot or cold, was to be placed before us twice a day for the rest of the time we were to spend in Spain after our arrival in Madrid, our first acceptance of it here would have been with submissive resignation. The kind of salad was not to be always the same, but the merluza, doubtless a valuable and sustaining article of diet, was to become terribly the same.

We went to the large café of the hotel for coffee, and sat once again beside an open window, to gaze, and to be gazed at. Some of the people in the street seemed to know us now, in the "Look! There they are!" manner, but we found it not unpleasant. When the mozo brought the coffee he told us, with the air of one offering discreet assistance, "El patrón es alemán. Pueden hablar en alemán con ello, si quieren.—The owner's a German. You can talk German with him if you want to." Possibly the patrón's nationality explained the bedroom furniture (we saw nothing that resembled it elsewhere in Spain), and possibly Germans were the prevailing kind of foreigners in Guadalajára at that time. We thanked the mozo and avoided the patrón.

An orchestra came in and tuned up. The café filled rapidly, and burgeoned with conversation that did not stop for the music, which was fair both in choice and execution. The crowd in the street was made up of the same kinds of people as the crowd we had watched this afternoon, but it had resolved, in composition and movement, into an organic thing, paséo, slowly surging. Vehicles, extremes of age and purpose, and all the eddy of cross current had suppressed themselves, and paired human life at full-tide moved, slowly, with a pressure of long rhythm, uphill, then down. Officers with radiant women, soldiers with lively girls, young men of the city with their *novias*, mature, established men with their wives or mistresses—double units of a very slowly, strongly pulsating mass turned the channel of the long street into a living see-saw, gentle with immensity in its period and amplitude.

With music on our left, the open window and protracted paséo on our right, we sat there until bedtime, listening, watching, and we learnt to recognise people in the crowd as they passed upward, and again, after many minutes, passed downward only to return. Where, in all that crowd, were the priests? And just when did it get dark?

It was late. To a slumber in vieux-rose.

Every morning we paid a bill—a fraction of the price of life—sometimes a small one, sometimes a large one, and on the 11th of May it was twenty-two pesetas. Then we did some shopping. At one shop we bought butter and cheese; at another, fresh rolls; at a third, bananas and oranges; at a fourth, wine; at a fifth, cigarettes. Then, off, down the long street, past the Palacio del Infantado, past the strip of open garden where the cadets of the officers' training corps were smartly on parade. Oh, energy of morning! Nothing will delay us now!

Nothing? "What's the chap with the handcart selling?" He was selling curious twists of fried batter that looked like rigid, crisp loops and bows of amber rope, held on slender, green reeds. They were appetising to behold as ice cream is to a schoolboy, and we bought some. We went on down the street feeling cheeky and pleased with ourselves, each of us dangling one twist on a tube of green vegetable, and eating another.

Down, to the river. The Henares, not a big river here, ran shallow and muddy and swift, between steep banks of red clay with pebbly strands at their bases and green reeds along them. A meadowland river, southward bound for Tagus.

The Guardia civil was on duty with rifles at the bridge, but let us pass on sight. The length of roadway that led to the railway station was paved with concrete, and in the concrete footpaths were hexagonal spaces for the young shade-trees that had already been planted, each space linked to the next by a narrow channel so that the whole chain could be flooded from one end, to water the trees. All this was new, a civic development and extension as unpaintedly new as that of Châteauneuf-sur-Cher away back in France. Guadalajára creeping across the river. And buildings and shops near the railway station were new. But the corners there were old.

From the bridge-head of Guadalajára the roads open a wide fan of ribs to the south, west, and north. We turned south-west, to follow the line of the river, and were on the straight and level road to Alcalá. And look! The telegraph line has *three* cross-ties! Yesterday there were only two.

Trees lined the way, but the way was open wide. A caminero house, not far ahead on the right, ought to have been something else, a farmhouse or a dairy, in those broad fields so near to the little city. Behind it ran the railway line, in gradual, vanishing divergence from the road. A train came swiftly out of the prairie, slowed down, to stop at Guadalajára. Most of its passengers were officers, many of whom looked as if they were returning from leave in Madrid. Others had the look of those reporting to a new depôt for duty. And the train itself—how smoothly trains move on a level track!—was the first we had seen in four days.

The strands of railway, road, and river fell apart in the roomy flatness. Across the meadows, under the eastern hills, the river ran between its trees, not near nor ever far, nor ever seen again to-day. Across the drier prairies to the west the railway ran unseen, a mile and more away. The road went on alone, between its double row of locusts in bloom. The lightly netted grace of their drooping, pinnate leaves entangled the viscous warmth of the morning, to let it slowly drain the fragrance of white, hanging clusters and thinly saturate the air above the ground with a perfume of wistaria. Would this be the day-long perfume of the road to Alcalá?

But there were less gentle things. Over to the right were buildings between the trees, and, almost hidden by mimicry, an observation balloon reared its round, ungainly, greenish back among the lower branches, like a bloated giantess of sows trying to struggle on to her forefeet to sit up. The familiar "sausage balloon" of the War, lowered but inflated. Troops of the aviation corps were on perfunctory parade on the grassy land to the right of the road, and not far past them, on the road itself, platoons of infantry were drilling in assorted footwear. Many of the men were in canvas shoes, alpargatas, which looked slack and untidy. Roadside activity extended as far as the caminero house, where men of the line-gangs were trundling large rolls of heavy copper wire, packed in hessian (burlap, as you call it) out from storage to the place of use nearby.

From here the road lay flat on the ground, so nearly straight that its plan resembled a bow unstrung beside the loosely shrivelled bowstring of the river. Open land, that stretched forward into the evening. A valley!

And here I lectured you on physiography, talking of "asymmetrical" valleys and "benched" rivers, but, though not unresponsive, you were not enthusiastic enough to encourage me to write it all down here. You were under the fragrant influence of the locusts, which, if they cast little shade themselves, were enough to put you "*à l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleur*." (Oh, but I know that's where you were!) And yet, you were not uninterested in the form of this particular valley.

The line of steep hills to the left, with the river flowing close under them—they were the south-eastern side of the valley; narrow, nearly vertical. The flat prairie to the right, miles wide, sloping so gently towards the river that it looked level, sloping down from a string of little villages or tiny towns along the fold where, far away, the roll of gentle hills began—that was the north-western side of the valley: broad, nearly horizontal. It looked as if the whole segment of the river between Guadalajára and Alcalá had slipped sideways to the left until the steep hills had stopped it, and, in a manner, it has really done so.

The map showed that the wide strip of prairie is watered by a long canal, the Canal del Henares, which comes from far up the valley and goes nearly to Alcalá, but remains three kilometres to the right of the road nearly all the way, so that we could not see it.

At wide intervals there were houses down by the river, the biggish houses of large farms or estates. They looked prosperous amid their heavy trees, and fields of good wheat and barley extended from them, up and down the valley. Much of the prairie too was under grain, but thinner, drier, than the growth along the meadow side. The relative productivity of the country here, the long, open views across it, and the map, were helping me to a better understanding of Guadalajára than I had been able to develope yesterday.

Like most cities where modern trade and business are thriving, Guadalajára has an advantageous position with reference to things more general than the character of the little area of ground on which it stands. The tactical strength of the long spur that nudges the river, for example, means little to modern Guadalajára. But the spur itself still means a great deal, because it constricts the river at the bend and offers an easy crossing. The banks there are firm and the bridge is short.

Down the long, loosely bending sprays of main road from the north—from Barcelona; from Zaragoza, which means, of course, from France; and from the head of Biscay by way of Soria—traffic from the whole Pyreneean frontier converges on to one arterial road, our road, in order to cross the Henares at Guadalajára and so proceed onward by the easiest way to Madrid. And the spur, descending gently from the difficult hills of the south-east, brings a cross-line of traffic down to the river from that way, by a main road which comes from Valencia and Cuenca and goes on to Burgos, far in the north. The spur, then, makes Guadalajára not only a crossing, but also a cross-ways, and gives the locality a critical, focal power.

Now, this southward convergence of roads on to an important cross-roads occurs in the best part of the province. To the north-east of Guadalajára difficulties begin, the land gets drier, higher, and is cut by deep gorges. The country to the east is rough, its difficulty betrayed by the tortuous pattern of the few roads which traverse it. But the land to the west and north-west, so sharply marked off from that to the east by the line of steep hills that remained on our left all the way from Torija to Alcalá, the land between the Henares and the distant Sierra de Guadarrama, is a wide and gentle apron that spreads right up to the foot of the mountains.

Many rivers descend from the Sierras de Guadarrama and de Ayllón to flow across it in open valleys until they unite with the Henares and the Jarama—the next river we were to see. The mountains draw an appreciable rainfall over it. People have assembled on it, in villages and little towns, more densely than in the regions to the east and north. It is a broad, gently tilted facet that leans more easily towards the Tagus than do other slopes of this northern side of that river's great basin. "The apron of Guadarrama," let us call it.

Madrid itself stands on the southern edge of the apron at a place opposite a low gap in the mountains where traffic passes between north-western and south-eastern Spain. Just through the gap is Avila in Old Castile, on to which the lines converge for their slender passage to Madrid.

Between these influences—of the well-populated and relatively productive "apron," the dry and difficult east and north, the control of a large province of uneven character, the proximity of Madrid, and the lines of natural movement across the plateau—

Guadalajára stands balanced. The place that is a crossing and a cross-ways is also a point of balance for the activities of life in its surroundings. Its prosperity, as a vassal of commercial Madrid, seems assured.

Guadalajára, like Valladolid, and perhaps like Seville, is inherent with "geographical energy" that has enabled it to respond to the influences of modern life. And it has kept its windows open to receive them. It has let them destroy much of the refinement of its old spirit, and has exchanged its old beauty for a new, hasty, democratic prosperity that is at present too superficial and too uneducated to understand those deeper needs that are satisfied only when there is beauty. It reveals that decline of public taste which so generally ensues when the vitality of the modern economic system pours brute energy into an older, slower system.

Not so Alcalá! But I could detect no power dormant in the geographical environment of Alcalá that will drive it to the same questionable sacrifice.

We were out of sight of Guadalajára by now, and were not able to discern even so much of it as the ugly copper dome, which is a less prominent landmark than we would have supposed yesterday.

The morning was nearly over, so we sat down on the dusty grass beside the road to eat a lunch as varied and nearly as good as the one eaten in the gravel pit near Zaragoza. But the place—an open one beside a straight, flat road, where the locusts, if ever so fragrant, cast little shade, because many of their boughs had lately been lopped off; and where a light but steady traffic of cars and lorries kept on igniting the dust like a running flame that burnt out as it followed—was no place of dreamy stillness. Nevertheless, we stayed there for about two hours.

I can see you there still, as in one of those photographs of persons who were too close to the camera, bent forward a little, because flat ground enforces the posture, your long straight legs reaching much further forward to an arresting expanse of upright soles. Whatever used we to talk about in those motionless hours of midday? Most contented hours they were, and this occasion—alas!—the last but one.

Our fruit peelings made the place untidy, gave it the appearance of a place where a picnic has been held, but there came down the road a man and a boy and a dog, driving a flock of greedy sheep that surrounded us, overran us as if we were objects of no importance. They ate every shred of the peelings and left the ground clean when they passed on. There was plenty of grass, but every sheep believed that the grass a little further on was better, and they fed in a stupid, hurried way, by transient acts of indiscriminate sampling. Every sheep believed, too, that any other soft vegetable matter was superior to dusty grass, and they ate all the leaves from the felled boughs that lay under the locust trees. The flock moved as one mass, without stragglers, as if no sheep had any wish to think for itself. It came, swamped us like a flood that left only our heads above water for several minutes of crowded, streaming breadth and thickness, and when it passed we felt stranded in a still vacancy that made the place different from what it had been. Only the dog was inclined to stay with us, and even he went off, like a laggard child, when his master called him.

An hour later we ourselves went past the sheep, a long way down the road. They were all huddled on the grass near a turnoff to villages on, and beyond, the prairie, Alovera and Quer, and the boy was in charge, alone. The man and the dog must have gone to Alovera for lunch, for there was no other place to which the shepherd of that blinking, dull-witted flock—so like silly old women on a beach!—might have gone.

The road went straight on, into the middle of the afternoon, with that pleasant monotony that puts memory to sleep. The relation of all things but one remained the same, and even of that one my remembrance is not clear.

Between three and four o'clock, nearer to four than to three, we stepped across the boundary, out of the province of Guadalajára into the province of Madrid, a change that should have been immense with finality, but was marked with less emphasis than a lonely birthday in middle-age. It might have gone unnoticed, were it not that the roadside locusts, the perfume of the road, came to an end somewhere during the middle of that afternoon, so that we walked on into unadorned, open brightness. Undoubtedly, the fragrant avenue stopped short at the boundary between the provinces, and a naked road continued into the province of Madrid.

Our next halt was on the open wayside. There was a railway station out on the prairie behind us, nameless and concealed, but in front, the hills beyond the river lifted one bare shoulder from their even miles of draped simplicity, exposing their loveliness of body in one dominating hill of modelled clay. The Cerro de la Vera Cruz—Hill of the True Cross, banded with malachite-green and ochre-red and lichen-green; handsome, stratified bulwark of the rough lands to the east, standing above the river like the wall of an elevated place of holiness, where scapulary villages with names like Santorcáz and los Santos de Humosa cling behind the heights that look far down to Alcalá.

And Alcalá indeed is a place to be approached with reverence, because it is beautiful and radiant, and peaceful and profound.

We had been walking again but a few minutes when the town disclosed itself, began slowly to rise before us like the peak of a dark island across the level sea. Far down the road it lay, straight ahead, living in the later, attainable world of five o'clock, rising, expanding, shaping itself before our eyes into a sombre cluster of baroque towers and domes. Tropical outline of silhouette that overtopped the trees of its girdled groves; darkness of grace against the brighter sky, but dark with the unweighted darkness of repose and shade; færy barrier, stretching like a wrought-metal grille from side to side across the low, flat land, where unassuming hills crept in from beyond the prairie to pinch the shallow of the valley to a strait. Alcalá de Henares (for there are many other towns in Spain called Alcalá) *al Kala*—the castle, the Moorish castle on the Henares, built in the wide strait to guard the wider way, sent our thought far back, down through the low gap where Ariza locks its hills together, to Zaragoza's distant towers and domes.

Evening is the time, when towns like these can intercept the sun, the time for travellers to approach, our time. And gifts like these, the unpremeditated bounty of the road, were often ours. We sought no vantage to behold; we made no slaves of studied circumstance—of light, of ground, of time-of-day, combined to give effect. We only trusted to the road, and found abundant beauty waiting, and beheld the natural pose of things. And slowly, at the pace of our approach, was Alcalá examined, studied leisurely and well, with that fine ease we owe to lovely things. No fashioned object of collector's pride was handled with more sensuous, dwelling satisfaction than these rare compositions of inhabited Earth were studied by our eyes. Was Alcalá the fairest of them all? Sometimes I think so.

Life in the world around us intensified, in the deepening hour of the approach. Tall crops of wheat, not yet turned by the touch of yellow Summer, spread green on either hand. The farms became estates, and houses by the river—stone villas, not unbeautiful—expressed a landed wealth more sure than ready money. A boundary stone by the roadside spoke to us in Latin, but we passed on, passed between a great stone farmhouse and a great stone barn, where a fountain and a horse-trough asked us to wash the sour dregs of wine out of our canettes before we should enter Alcalá. We obeyed. Green, algal slime clung to the inside surfaces of the trough, like the chewed grass in horses' mouths. And the stone, the building stone of Alcalá, was yellow as dry stubble straw, an even tint, flat-faced and palely warm with a dry brilliance, where barn and farmhouse caught the evening sun.

The road went over culverts where deep drains crossed the fields, and the light, swift traffic of the day seemed to be hastening, for swifter and more often the vehicles went by. Less openly the land extended, and the hills drew lowly in, as if all things were bound for Alcalá. And then, the open road passed under trees, fine sycamores, and their shade was of the town. This was no road. This was a civic thing. Already we were there.

An open town, held in a great elbow of the river, spread flat on the land, but far from the river bank, far by a mile and more, withdrawn above the margin of possible flood. And still the wide place holds room, and the skirting river is not seen at Alcalá. Buildings of this north-western edge of the town are widely spread apart and the ground between them has the spirit of a park, an open park that is used.

It is ground where horses are ridden across the grass between the trees, because its clearness and levelness invite the body to run, suggest the attainment of speed. Horses—we passed by the horse-lines of a cavalry squadron, where large fatigue parties under the command of junior officers were cleaning and levelling the parade ground. Between there and the mass of the town cavalry horses were being exercised. This, too, would be a garrison town.

We did not plunge at once into the mass of Alcalá. We followed the outer, flanking streets around to its northern side for a mile before we turned sharply to the south-west, along a cobbled street that thrust itself into the town's heart. We stopped at the first café, more for advice than for coffee, and watched what seemed to be exclusively military traffic, as we drank our cafe con leche.

The transport of Spain's army was evidently inadequate for the ordeal of war, and civilian waggons of different kinds had been pressed into use. Many of the animals too, mules and horses, were bony, miserable creatures, unfit for any but home-service. At this hour, half-past five, there was a considerable movement of ordnance vehicles past the café, and to me, accustomed to the solid and uniform efficiency of the British supply-columns throughout the War, the sight of soldiers driving farmers' carts and waggons of all kinds, was no compelling assurance of ultimate victory. The transport of my own battalion was always bright as a Parisian omnibus, the animals were healthy, and things looked "all right." It used never to occur to us, then, that we might possibly be defeated.

The proprietor of the café directed us to a *casa de viajeros*, just around the corner in a sunny street lined with low, spreading pine trees. The patrona kept us outside the door, saying that she had no rooms, but all at once she brightened. "What! Only for the night? Of course! If you only want to stay the night I can easily put you up. Come in." She took us to a clean, plain, corner room on the first floor, where there were two little iron bedsteads with white smock counterpanes, wicker chairs, a table, a wash-stand, open windows, fresh air, and sunlight. Quiet maids brought hot water, towels, and the information that dinner would be at half-past nine. While you shaved I looked out the front window into the crown of a pine tree, and I am ready to swear by the Southern Cross that that tree, and others near it, bore both cones and catkins! I had always thought that a pine tree could be a lady or a gentleman, but not both.

But—pine trees, a quiet, friendly street of low buildings, this bright quality of the fresh air, the flimsy curtains behind me, the wicker chairs, the fringe on the counterpanes! Was I in Alcalá de Henares, or in Tamworth, New South Wales? Another look—no. There were no verandahs along the street. And besides, there's Max behind there, face covered with lather. Nothing New-South-Welsh about him, except a few words I've taught him. But, may my own Canberra grow some day to be like Alcalá!

We found a square that seemed to be the centre of Alcalá, and we walked thence by a street that led almost due west, towards a square, yellow tower—our beacon. The first few blocks of that street were arcaded, if there can be such a thing as an arcade without arches. The upper storeys of the houses projected over the footpath and were supported by stone pillars. Fruit, confectionery, dried and fresh vegetables were displayed in the shop fronts underneath, in cool shadow laden with a spiced aroma that seemed permanent, as if the prone column of air that lay between the shops and the pillars were a beam of tenuous substance that remained fixed in that place.

The arcade itself was a thing of character and importance. The pillars were of different forms, different designs, and were extremely old. They suggested vanished buildings in a more ancient, vanished Alcalá, of which they alone, here put to a second use, were testimony. They came, perhaps, from long-demolished churches of the Visigoths and early Christians, from early Moorish mosques, bones of once corporate beauty lost now in the dissolution of its death, bones, more durable than the body of culture of past ages, now ranged in order here, making this place an open catacomb. They held up the light houses of to-day on architraves of massive wood, and this use of upright stone upholding level wood gave character of mingled rhythm to the long colonnade.

Arcade and cloister are features not uncommon in the Latin towns, particularly in Spain, but this combination of old stone and heavy wood was new to us. We found it again, exactly the same in style, in an old square in Valladolid, and, though I have not seen it, I know that it exists also at Avila. Three places far apart. At many places between them it is not to be found. It is as if the same wave of time had left the same fashion high and dry in these three places, but left the intervening places bare.

A certain heavy style of arcade exists in old streets in Berne. The arches are round, and the angular pillars between them spread out to massive bases, so that their feet expand, and the whole front of the arcade leans away from the street like the face of a dam. This kind of arcade is to be seen also at Coppet, on the Lake of

Geneva, and at Annecy in Savoy, three other places that are far apart. Between them are Fribourg, Lausanne, Geneva, with no such arcades. Geneva used to have wooden arcades—*balcons*, but of a different style altogether. Fashion, it seems, invaded Berne, Coppet, and Annecy—Alcalá, Avila, and Valladolid, at moments when they were ready and able to accept.

It was necessary for me to understand such things as this, for I seek relationships, and, having found a kind of town that is Aragonese, another kind of town that is Catalán, I expected to find a Castilian kind of town. But no such thing exists. No two towns in Castile appeared to us to be alike. Madrid and Toledo are as dissimilar as Paris and Singapore. Guadalajára and Alcalá, but sixteen miles apart, are like creatures of different classes. Does any other town resemble Salamanca?

Yet, when I came to examine at leisure the impressions of our journey, I found such things as this arcade of Alcalá, Avila, and Valladolid, and was tempted to say, "In Castile there are *crops of towns*, and these three were planted at the same time." But all the towns of this rank that exist in Iberia are old, remotely old. Therefore, in Castile there are not crops of towns, nor is there a Castilian kind of town. There is, actually, such variety that every town in Castile has a soul and character that make it individual, unique.

This arcade in Alcalá is no more than the manifestation of a period, of a fashion adopted by some places, neglected, or rejected, by others. The light mark of a particular time. Alcalá has few general features—it is open, the buildings are low, and the streets are straight, or nearly so, and form a simple network; but enough, in those few features, to distinguish Alcalá from many other towns we saw.

By this time we can be a long way from the arcade! We are, in fact, right under our square, yellow tower, which proves to be the tower of an old Gothic church on the west side of the town. The church is built of freestone, but there is much red brick about it, and it is being altered and restored inside and out.

We met a shabby person in the nave, who explained that, owing to the profanity of the building operations, the church was not at present holy, so that we could put our caps on and need not walk about bareheaded. The church would be reconsecrated only when the restoration was finished. We were not sure that his knowledge of ecclesiastical procedure was sound, nor were we disposed to succumb to his determination to be our guide to the beauties of the church. We went out. But the work in that plain old church was good, and we had had time enough to notice that a cardinal's hat, repeated in stone and stained glass, was evidently an emblem of importance.

North of the church we found a building of great beauty, and prominent on its façades, too, was this same cardinal's hat, armorially blazoned. This building, formerly the Archbishop's Palace, and now the repository of the national archives of Spain, consists of a number of large wings that enclose courtyards and hollow squares of lawn. It is low, of three storeys, the top storey ornate, the lower ones plain, like the Palacio del Infantado at Guadalajára: Clearly, some wings were extensions or alterations of its original scheme, and much of the work was restored.

But the parts of this building, separately regarded, were a joy to contemplate. They had musical balance, a light slenderness of restrained ornament, finished grace, and a poise of dignity that came from depth in their conception. Were the motive of decoration Gothic, mudéjar, or Renaissance, the same spirit of proportioned elegance ran throughout. Wings of red brick; others of buff stone, equally pleasing; and all under a low-pitched roof of tan tiles. A low octagonal tower rose from one angle, and a small, almost baroque spire from a ridge near it. Unity? Harmony of parts? Their very absence made a hybrid whole more Spanish in character than any faultless purity could have produced.

We went into the principal court and found ourselves under a pillared cloister that was lightly beautiful as an Elizabethan lyric. It was built in the beginning of the sixteenth century, but, if freshness be a quality as inherent and lasting in some architecture as it is in some poetry, it was here. The lower storey, of slender, round arches supported on slim pillars, sheltered a cobbled pavement level with the ground. The pillared balcony above it had the spirit of a balcony, and the delicate restraint of decoration of both tiers, almost bare in general detail, almost plain through simplicity, achieved, nevertheless, a marvellous abundance, a minute and chiselled intricacy, so that the whole double tier of each side of the cloister—pillars, capitals, arches, balustrade, architraves, cornices—appeared to have been carved and fretted out of one thin, upright slab of stone. There were a shallowness of relief, a slightness of advance and inset, that seemed to relate the whole sweep of each side of the cloister to one plane, and to draw the whole system of support into the dimensions of a slab. Yet there was no flatness of effect. These airy pillars and floating arches; these delicate lines of moulding and tracery, had been conceived in deliberate relation to light, shade, shadow, and to the depth of wall and pavement behind them, and they had a lively energy of rhythm, a lilt, almost, that would keep them young were one to dwell in that place for years. They have the lasting power to please, which is one of the tests that prove a thing profound. How the archbishops could refrain from dancing there—if they did refrain—is not easy to understand.

The architecture of this court, I learn, is "plateresque." Several architects whom I have asked have not been able to define the term for me, so I have attempted to express its meaning for myself. The plateresque is, I believe, an exclusively Spanish development of the early Renaissance combined with the last evaporations of Gothic, exquisite in its delicacy when pure, but is encountered more often as a decoration than as a distinct style of architecture. If I have properly identified the style, its name is itself a mnemonic of its leading characteristics: plateresque—*plat*, flat; *plata*, silver. General relief is low almost to flatness. The moulding and scrollwork would, in miniature, be appropriate to a medium very different from freestone—beaten silver.

Alcalá was not the first place where we saw plateresque architecture. In Zaragoza there are church portals and some interior embellishment in this style, and the "shell" motive is a common one there. But in Zaragoza we had not yet learnt to distinguish the plateresque from other early expressions of the Spanish Renaissance. We were to see it again, and to appreciate it more fully, at Salamanca.

This court in Alcalá held us, though we felt that we had no right to be there. A spacious and elegant stairway spread like an aristocratic invitation from the balcony to ascend. We did so. But the archives of Spain seemed to be unguarded. The place was deserted, a clear solitude that forbad intrusion.

We went down again, crossed the courtyard to discover what lay beyond it, passed through an archway, and found before us acres of meadow, cows, and a great wall of stone that enclosed the whole domain of the former archbishops of Alcalá. Massive square towers that rose at intervals along the wall demonstrated the danger of being a Spanish archbishop in the Middle Ages.

On the way back into town we admired the façade of the university, an institution that brought much of the genius of Castile to maturity at Alcalá de Henares and made the city, in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, one of the brilliant intellectual manifestations of the Europe of those times. The low buildings of the university—my memory reconstructs them in pink brick and light yellow freestone—have that harmony of grouping and proportion that makes them one building, and the principal façade is a culminating achievement of loveliness.

The symmetry of its three low storeys, and the spring of their light adornment from the ground to the handsome roof line, are perfect. The plain, flat surface of the great wall presents large, responding areas that are significantly bare, and is delicately, logically garlanded where upright line of corner, and running line of edge and frame offer the natural supports for decoration. The whole scheme of its ornamentation is upheld without effort by a few slender Renaissance pillars and pilasters, and by the frames of the few and relatively small windows. There is an increase, a spread of decoration outwards and upwards, a gathering and deepening of weight inwards and downwards, that centre in the arched portal. No strain or extravagance mars the easy carriage of what is a unified design of composite elements rather than a scheme of ornamentation. It belongs to no one style, but the motives are simple: a few exquisite figures, a suggestion of trailing ribands on the second tier, and a few plateresque panels. Details that look like scrollwork from a distance resolve into meaning, become beautifully grouped figures, on approach. Two such figures uphold on banners the device of the cardinal's hat, but the crown and the double eagle occupy a place of precedence above them.

The fresh, living beauty of this façade is a moving thing, for it has life; indeed, it almost has motion. It expresses the fine quality of the life of its time—the first half of the sixteenth century—

through its adequacy of proportion in all things. Liberty and restraint, freedom and convention, stateliness and grace, dignity and joy, combine with the most sensitive sense of balance. They knew, then, how fine so many things can be, and knew so nicely just how far so many things should go, that even to this wall they gave no excess yet withheld no generosity. It has been given just enough for what the gay light of Alcalá can hold of shade and shadow to reveal design in pink brick and pale yellow stone.

We did not enter the university buildings, for we had little interest in "sights," as such, and were not "doing" Alcalá nor any other place on this journey. We were two people keenly alert to beauty, deeply interested in the feeling and spirit of places and communities, but with little time at our disposal anywhere. We used the time we had for its one intended purpose, our own enjoyment, but always in that enjoyment, as part of it indeed, we tried to capture and to understand as much as can possibly be caught in passing. And such things as the cloister of the Archival Palace and the façade of the University held the true, fine spirit of Alcalá.

There was a square of garden near the university which also held the spirit of this delightful place in the character of its radiantly sombre shrubs and trees. A warm richness of brownish green in the foliage there, the green-brown of Lebanon cedars, colour known to Ribera, Murillo and Zurbarán. And a terminal delicacy of leafage, a tufted, springy softness to coniferous trees that were like the sequoias of California. Shrubbery and conifers are as much a part of open Alcalá as its red brick and freestone, but I have reason to believe that they are a late, possibly a recent part of it.

We took tea and ate cakes—afternoon tea at seven o'clock—at a place with a wide wooden verandah on the main square. Three schoolboys were playing a kind of leapfrog out in the square, one of them a bullying little cheat quite prepared to spoil the game if he were not winning. He wanted to do all the leaping but none of the bending, and the others were patient though not submissive.

Among the shrubs behind them was, I think, a bronze statue, perhaps of Cervantes, for Alcalá claims to be his birthplace, but so too, I understand, does more than one village in la Mancha. No—I am not positive that there was a statue in the square, but if the monumental instinct failed in Alcalá de Henares, if the natural reflex is absent there, my mind has filled the gap in this part of the pattern of civic monotony by projecting a bronze statue of Cervantes into the square.

We walked afterwards through the southern and eastern parts of the town, where many large buildings, churches, colleges and schools, spread a serious, meditative beauty that would satisfy weeks of sojourn in the place. Certain old buildings, however, created a melancholy atmosphere of decline. Once, when Alcalá and Salamanca were the great universities of Spain, they were monasteries and colleges, but now, in a modern Spain that has a dozen big universities and is beginning to care less for learning than for science, they have been put to profane uses.

There were mean streets on the south side, muddy streets, and great lengths of unbroken wall along some of them. Down one street came scores of boys, loitering home from school in the shade of the pines. And there were stable smells, and long stables on the edge of the town.

We skirted the open fields, looked through the trees for the river, but could not find it, and we entered the town again from the north, walking aimlessly until we came to a splendid square, a place of green gardens. We stopped there to admire the front of an old stone residence, but were more interested in the group of officers outside it. They were sitting in wicker chairs under a striped awning, at ease with their pipes and drinks after the day's duties.

For all appearance they might have been a group of British officers, the C Mess of a division, in Amiens or St. Omer on just such an evening ten years before. To me, the familiarity of the spectacle was poignant—here was the illusion of a life I had actually lived, of a life that invested the whole activity of years, and which, whatever its quality may have been, has now passed irrevocably away. Illusion.

But no! For those men it was real. Spain was at war with her traditional enemy, the Moor, but this time in his own country. The illusion was only for me—this was not, could not be, my war. And then, it ceased to be illusion, even for me. It was real for those men, real *now*. Nations call that kind of life into being whenever they need it, and that life dissolves and ceases to be, when the need is past. Here it was, in Spain, so real.

It could happen, might happen, again, and not in Spain! I might know it again myself. You, who have never known it and who are so curious about it, you are the sort of person who promptly gets killed. I *know*, for that is written on people. And yet, you would accept it eagerly, because you love anything that is life! And life itself dissolves, is thus cancelled out, in contradiction.

The moment the General rode up I became external, a person from a nation at peace. No such general existed in France ten years before. Gorgeous in blue cape and red breeches, he was mounted on a white horse, and attended by two orderlies on bay horses. The officers rose to their feet, the officer of the day advanced to meet him, and they all saluted. The General, a handsome, oldish man, dismounted briskly. In his left hand he held a bunch of succulent thistles which he gave as a reward to his horse, like a man who cares as much for the beast he rides as he cares for himself. As we turned to go the horses were led off and the group of officers relaxed into informality.

Just around the corner we met the patrona from our casa de viajeros. She was laden with baskets and parcels which obviously contained food, and she smiled as if we were not only the cause of her errand of the afternoon, but also as if we would be pleased with its result—a smile that said, "I've good things for you here." We inferred that it would be useless to return to the house expecting dinner for a long time yet, so we loitered through the streets, and sat on a stone bench in the main square.

Troops, off parade, were walking about in twos and threes, here and there one with a girl, but most of them lost in the empty boredom of the free hours of a soldier's life in a strange place. A few bought ice-cream blocks from a street seller. They were robust fellows, neatly dressed, some in green drab, others in navy-blue tunics, but all in little round caps without peaks. What poetry of the Spanish imagination had sent infantry to Guadalajára, cavalry to Alcalá?

We went back to the casa de viajeros long before dark; to do what I, at any rate, had not done since we were at Bourges. We wrote letters, letters that we would post in Madrid itself to-morrow night! For this journey was all but over, and the sooner we should speak again to the world that belonged to us the sooner would it again be speaking with us.

I have forgotten the patrona's dinner and the attractive maids, bedworthy wenches, who served it. No doubt the maids and the dinner were both commendable, but the evening paper from Madrid had brought the results of the drawing of a lottery and everybody at the long table was excited about it. An officer who sat near us explained the drawing to us, but, except that the first prize was a a million pesetas, that there were many other prizes, that all the winning numbers were tabulated on the front page of the paper, and that lotteries are frequently held under some system of state supervision, and—oh, yes—that everybody, *everybody* buys a ticket, I have forgotten about the lottery too. But what a buzz of discussion!

That night, in bed, I thought much, as I have often thought since then, of the meaning of the beauty of Alcalá—of its place in the understanding of Castile, of Spain. Let me tell you about it. A long time ago, ten whole days ago, while we were on the way from Osera to Zaragoza, I began to feel that there was a characteristic proportion to things in Spain. You may remember that I contrasted the slender ribbon of green fields along the Ebro with the far-spreading bareness of the surrounding hills—a vein of wealth running through boundless poverty (you made a similar comparison yourself at Calatayud). And even Zaragoza, the city, is a little hoard of riches in the wilderness. Even within the city we discovered brighter intensities, that were almost deliberately hidden away in small, secluded places. The meaning of such a proportion of wealth to poverty, of radiance to dullness, of sumptuousness to austerity, of ornament to plainness, of warmth to coldness, of intensity to impassiveness, became clear at Alcalá, and its perfect symbol the principal court of the Archival Palace. Its common symbol throughout Spain is, I believe, the patio. Symbol—of what? Of an exquisitely balanced spiritual proportion, an expression of the character of the very country itself, the country, an influence that underlies all the life it has developed.

Spain is a poor and rough country, truly the "haggard country" of my engine-driving acquaintance on the ship. The hills of Castile are naked and austere. The great hollows and bony mountains of Aragon are barren. All the way from the Pyrenees to Madrid colour had been fading out of the land. All the way from Fraga to Torija the quality of life outspread was thin. Spain, we found, is a land of thronging towns far set in solitude. Here and there oases of intensest green respond to guided waters and laborious control. But nearly everywhere the surroundings of life are hard, forbidding, even rigorous, and life, which has spread with a serious face over the land, has put on an exterior cold and plain as that of the land itself. Ordinary Spaniards live in plain houses, and they have no superfluous belongings nor frivolous amusements. They have learnt how to make few and simple things suffice for every day.

But life in Spain is ardent for satisfaction as life elsewhere. It attains its balance by turning inward to its own resources, to hidden springs of exuberance, to localised intensities, to the concentration of its warmth and excitement, to a serious pursuit of joy, to things that focus what would otherwise be a spiritual rarefaction down to points of blazing brightness, shielded lest they dazzle, and respected lest they grow dull through abuse. There are not many table knives in rural Spain, but those they have are bright and sharp!

The inward intensity of this life which proceeds from day to day in comfort without luxury is to be felt by strangers only if they enter into life in Spain. And it is not difficult, as it is in France, for strangers to enter into life in Spain. For the life of Spain can be inhaled. Paséo, a serious daily habit, can be *felt* as a stimulus of the towns to eternal youth. But it is in ceremony, festival, and national amusement, that the stranger will most easily find the localised intensity of Spanish life.

It was at Burgos that we witnessed the Coronation of the Virgin, and saw the brilliance of elaborate mediæval ceremony as a real and significant thing, a living response of the city to a solemn occasion, and no mere pageant, no false, costumed resuscitation of the appearance of the past by the present.

And was it on the anniversary of the patron saint of Madrid, or of the king's accession, that Madrid burst into a display of colour? My cities, and yours, deck themselves out with flags and bunting and strings of coloured lights on such loyal occasions; in the gaudy, loud freshness of red, white and blue, a vulgar, flaunting combination that shouts indiscriminately "Hail Columbia!" "Vive la France!" or "Rule Britannia!" But Madrid achieves a rich, heavy beauty. On this day of rejoicing every building along the principal streets of the grey-green city had hung panels of carpet from the window-sills of every floor, carefully, exactly, with a precision worthy of the Germans or the Japanese. And such carpets! Every house of business had its own colours and design, but the dimensions of all the carpets were the same. The patterns were heraldic rather than floral, and the colours, gamboge, mustard, blood-red, bottle-green, wood-brown, were fabulously rich and sumptuous. It looked so proper to Madrid, was no alien wealth of Bokhara, and it vanished as it had appeared, so that the surprised, sunny morrow felt cold, bare, and impassive.

Even the bull fight, which has spread so false an idea of Spain and the Spaniards, is a barbaric spectacle of splendid colour, both in setting and emotion. And, most dangerous of all sports, it is absolute sport, for the toreador is a true gladiator—the bull's life or his; and one day it is his. That day, say some, is the one that spectators have anticipated unconsciously, with fanatical patience, for years, and it may well be so. Cruelty still exists in human character in spite of our gentle pretence, and no one has revealed its devilish nature better than Strindberg. It has, really a fierce existence in man. They do not pretend otherwise in Spain, though they do not exalt cruelty. Intensity, suppressed and held within, until the moment bursts! That is the bull fight. And thus even do they dance, in Spain.

For this inward intensity of the country one has, naturally, to seek within. The outside is plain, restrained. And whether it be the land or its life or the things its life has made, it is the same. There is a place, places—like Alcalá itself—a focus, a moment that bursts, a discovery of riches hidden. And so, you must enter, join in, go inside!—or stay without and wait for the critical moment.

Nothing, I believe, so expresses this balance of sumptuousness and austerity, of ornament and plainness, of the restrained exterior and the abundance without surfeit within, as the architecture that can properly be called Spanish.

There is the grim, bleak magnitude of the Escorial, on the side of austerity; and there is the ornate little chapel of San Juan de los Reyes in Toledo, on the side of decorative abundance. Both are pure in style, yet they are different as could possibly be. Both, nevertheless, are logically Spanish.

Again, there is the cathedral of Burgos, grave and dark, on the one hand, and on the other there is the Alhambra, which I have not seen, but which, I am convinced, is lightly, elegantly profound, like a dazzling path to infinity. And again, both are fairly pure in style, but of these, neither is properly Spanish, though each has exerted untold influence in Spain. The Alhambra is mainly Moorish. The cathedral of Burgos is an imitation, in a way in which the modern cathedral of Liverpool is not, for the former is not an expression of the native genius in the familiar, native tongue. It is French in spirit. Indeed, Burgos itself is somewhat French in feeling, in spite of such things as the tall-stalked liqueur glasses of its cafés, beryl, amethyst, and honey-coloured.

Is it possible, then, to distinguish an architecture that can properly be called Spanish? Yes, I think so, if the confounding of borrowed, modified, alien styles into a hybrid unity be acceptable as an architecture. Surely, the great cathedral of Toledo, though far from typical, is a true, Spanish hybrid!

This hybrid architecture of Spain matured, I believe, in the rearward tranquillity of the Moorish expulsion, when Gothic had lost its impetus and the Renaissance had not yet seized the imagination, and its origins are in Moorish and mudéjar. From the Moor came the ideas of low, rectilinear buildings with tiled roofs, and the enclosure of roofless courts. But the Moor would have decorated them outside with brick patterns and glazed tiles. The Spaniard let them grow plain outside, or decorated them with restraint. Within, however, the Spaniard encrusted them with lavish abundance. The patios—the courts—and the ceremonial chambers were given a sumptuous richness of intricate adornment.

In order to achieve this, the Spaniard borrowed, adapted, and even developed on his own account, the last exaggerations of lacy Gothic, which he deprived of its pointed and vertical purity of idea by curvature and convergence of line upon itself, and even by the twisting of moulded columns, until it ceased, almost, to be recognisable as Gothic. He borrowed, too, the early delicacy of the Renaissance, and from this and the former, evolved his own plateresque style. And he accepted and adapted the geometrical intricacy of mudéjar brick, Moorish tile, and Moorish *artesonado*—panelled woodwork, ceilings.

And, because the elaborate styles were used not as orders of architecture, but as motives of decoration, they did not at once become decadent. Unavoidably, some objectionable buildings arose when the decline came, but it is not of them that I am writing. And, because these motives were elaborated to sumptuousness, to crusted and crowded intricacy, they did not fall out of harmony one with another.

And finally, because they were the adornment of small, closed places of simple exterior, in a poor, bare country, they did not, until they had passed the height of their development, become a florid excess of tiresome exuberance, but came to represent a right and satisfying intensity, an arresting satisfaction to eyes that had long looked out across the melancholy world *lejos, lejos*—far away, to unrelieved horizons. Nor must we forget that the men and women who used to live in these rooms and courts dressed themselves, by preference, in black.

Hybrid, impure, this architecture of Spain, which found its perfect balance early in the sixteenth century—Spain's own Elizabethan Age—and found it here, at Alcalá.

We saw, here, only the façade of the university, and the courtyard of the Archival Palace, but there was much more to be seen within. At Guadalajára we saw the outside of the Palacio del Infantado; at Zaragoza, many churches and old residences; and at Lérida we peeped into a courtyard. Neglect—neglect!

But our eyes were open, after the journey was over, at Toledo; and at Salamanca, where the stalactitic loveliness of a honeycomb, artesonado ceiling in the university nearly called a shout from us; and at Valladolid, where we thought, at the time, that the white patio of the college of San Gregorio was too florid in its embroidered abundance, but that opinion I have since had reason to modify.

Plainly impassive or simply restrained exterior, hiding an inward intensity of exquisitely rich adornment, such, at its best, is this hybrid architecture of Spain.

And thus methinks should men of judgment frame
Their means of traffic from the vulgar trade,
And, as their wealth increaseth, so inclose
Infinite riches in a little room.

Sumptuous chambers, decorated patios, and rare elegance of proportion—do not these express the inner warmth of Spain, and is not the patio its symbol? And is it not all, ultimately, the gift of the Moor, who knew the desert?

You may go to sleep now, as I did after I first played with these ideas in bed in Alcalá.

Morning came, not like the morning of a last day, but like morning in a world that will endure for ever. We paid twelve pesetas to the patrona and left one for the maids, and then went to the shops under the arcade to buy lunch. You, the banker at the time, had trouble in changing a fifty peseta note, which seemed a large and exciting amount of money to people in the little shops. Actually, it was our last reserve of ready money. We bought butter, cheese, and chocolate, and then took the main road at a quarter to nine in the morning. The air was cool, almost chilly.

The road out of Alcalá led us through unsuspected western gardens—a long strip of shrubbery between the road and an accompanying wall on the left; an extensive park intersected by shady walks and alleys on the right. Past them, Alcalá ended abruptly against the bare, dry country on its western side.

Within ten minutes of leaving the city we had crossed the sandy bed of a little river, the Arroyo Camarmilla, and had saluted the road's companions, the railway, and the telegraph line. The latter now had four cross-ties to each pole, and carried eight strands of wire, all on the two top cross-ties.

The map showed the railway as running on the right, north of the road, for the next four kilometres, but we crossed it near the arroyo and it remained on the left, the south side. I remember it distinctly, on account of a necessary halt at a place where there were many briar bushes between road and railway and a broad sweep of orchard land beyond, south of, the line.

During that first hour three aeroplanes kept flying at a very low altitude, to and fro above the road, as if they were deliberately studying our own movements. Practice flight, no doubt, and ourselves imaginary Riffs in an imaginary Morocco, for the benefit of cadets of the flying corps.

And during that first hour we began to feel a change in the country. By comparison with yesterday it was lonely, and the naked hills were close on the right, low and drab. The nearly straight and level road went much more westerly than yesterday, with little of south in its direction, and the flat valley of the Henares bore the unseen river further and further away to the left, to the south-west, and bore it away for good.

We were bound for the open country, to cross the undulating hills, and the company of rivers would be ours no more. And quickly Alcalá was lost to view, and there remained the solitary miles. We must suppose that we crossed four arroyos in that empty morning, but their beds were shallow, dry, formless on the flatter land that skirted the low hills.

Out in the solitude of Castile the radiance of receding Alcalá became a warm and cherished possession that led us to the core of the meaning of Castile, of New Castile. For Alcalá is its loveliest creation and its soul embodied.

Quevedo studied in the little city, and graduated from its university. Lope de Vega wrote and produced his early plays there and was a very gay young Shakespeare at Alcalá. Cervantes, they say, was born there, but, through some quaint prejudice, I want Cervantes to have been born in a village in la Mancha, say at Argamasilla de Alba in the province of Ciudad Real, a sufficiently Castilian place. All the same, there is preserved in Alcalá the formidable evidence of the birth certificate of a "(Miguel) son of Rodrigo de Cervantes and his wife Doña Leonor." But, was Doña Leonor also "de Saavedra"? And why was the child's name *added* to the certificate, apparently by a different hand? It was at Alcalá, too, that Cardinal Ximenes de Cisneros—he whose hat adorns so many buildings; he who raised the university to such prestige—published, in 1514, the first New Testament in Greek, and so stirred Erasmus to rivalry.

All the warm, graceful, cultured and profound spirit of Castile came to expression in Alcalá, when Spain—Castile—was at her intellectual greatest, yet no depth of learning made life ponderous there, for learning was part of life, and life was to enjoy. Alcalá expressed Castile, and Castile was, and is, both soul and intellect.

For this hard, lofty land produced a Santa Teresa de Avila as well as a Cervantes, a Lope, and a Calderón. And this hard, lofty land, where life is rarefied by thin air of biting winter winds, drew —through some strong power it exerts mysteriously over the mind

—Goya from his Aragon; Velazquez, who was half Portuguese, from Andalusian Seville, and, greatest of them all perhaps, the Cretan "el Greco," from the Italy of Titian and Michael Angelo. These and many more were drawn to Castile, the land of Alcalá, which can still draw others like them.

And these great painters of Castile have handled colour in the spirit of the land. Velazquez, in spite of the modern freshness of many of his canvases, loved harmonies of black and brown and olive green. Goya, brilliant, when he wished to be, in yellow and the greens of Spring, subdued the general world to grey and black. El Greco chilled the sensuous warmth of Italy to colder, loftier exaltations of Castile.

And those great writers of Castile (how little do I really know about them!) worked, some of them, with enormous energy, produced prodigiously, and Castilian writers do so still to-day. The lists of works of some living Spanish writers, of Galdós and the brothers Quintero, for example, express a bulk of writing as formidable as the works of William Morris. Here at least is activity! Ardour and zeal in the domain of intellect, which is Castile.

The days of Castilian greatness have receded, far as the days of British Elizabeth, and Alcalá has faded. But Castile remains, and still may be a power over men. For when we think of Spain we think of, or mean, more than any other part, Castile. Tourists, who love colour and flee melancholy, go to Andalusia, where we did not go, and they believe in a Spain of silk and cigars and light women.

But all the countries which compose the land called Spain—Andalusia, Murcia, Valencia, Catalonia, Aragon, Navarre, Viscaya, Galicia—are wrapped around the high meseta of Castile and of León, adherent, held, not in too strong a sense united even after centuries of political evolution, but held, by the magnet of Castile, its intellectual or spiritual power; and the language of superior thought in Spain is the language of Castile.

And it is here, in Castile, that the national experience of life became mature. What other nation has known the vicissitudes of Spain? Iberian, Roman, Visigoth, and Moor—barbarian, pagan, early Christian, and infidel—have each long held the land in turn, but native blood has never been subdued, and there emerged intensely Christian Spain, whose leader was Castile.

The noble age has gone and Alcalá has faded—stands now precariously, between progressive Guadalajára and the metropolis, Madrid. Sixteen miles from the one, eighteen from the other, proximities too narrow, and the world from year to year less interested in learning. Alcalá, the spirit of Castile, may die.

For this country, Spain, is now advancing resolutely into the full tide of modern civilisation—Americanisation, as we wrongly call it—the last country of western Europe, except Portugal, to do so. Because of her delay, Spain is supposed to be a backward country inhabited by an exhausted people—*raza cansada*, as one of her own novelists, Pio Baroja, puts it.

The Spaniards have a right to be exhausted. For centuries they fought the Moor and forged the state. Then they spent their energy in vast imperial enterprise, while still fighting the Devil at home, until, drained of much of the vigour that went into the conquest and colonisation of the New World, and severely tried by fighting the Devil, they retired into the enjoyment of imperial wealth, withdrew from Europe, neglected imperial duty, and lost everything, while the squabbling devils of political discontent have broken loose at home again and again.

But—an exhausted people? We know better than that. A country of poverty and rigour can keep its people vigorous indefinitely. It is in easy, prodigal countries that life settles into soft and easy habit, at least among white races. As for Spain, it is only a hundred years since Goya died and the bull fight is very much alive.

A backward country? It has a sufficiency of many things that make life what it should be, a satisfaction and a joy, and the Spaniards know more about the western idea of living than any but the other Latin races. A poetic people, and what means most to them is life itself. In Spain the business of living joyously and generously seems not to have been subordinated to that business of making a living which elsewhere enslaves our age.

But Spain is turning again towards a more active life in the world. She will have the same good fortune as the United States, through having allowed forerunners the privilege of painful experiment, so that only the successful results need be accepted.

"Old Madrid" is a fairy tale. The system of controlling traffic on the Calle de Alcalá is the same as that in Dallas, Texas, one of gongs and lights. The underground railway has incorporated the best features of the London "tube," the Paris "métro," and the New York "subway." The university looks like the Southern California Technical School. Except the new Plaza de Toros, the bull-fighting arena, many of the new public buildings are in the very worst of the "imposing," neo-classical styles that are so much admired by ignorant but progressive people. "Old Madrid?" Where is it?

And Spain, outside Madrid, is constructing motor highways, developing motor transport, extending telegraph lines, tunnelling the Pyrenees, reorganising the railway system, harnessing water power, organising aeroplane services, restoring her monuments, and planting trees, while ensuring, all the time, her freedom from foreign financial control! And these, if done properly, are admirable things to do. They may even be necessary. Certainly, there are many people in Spain who believe so.

It may be that nations exhaust themselves and lie fallow, but all such hypotheses are difficult to support. Italy, after her tremendous expenditure of spiritual energy in the Renaissance, rested long, and has again sprung into activity. Denmark, after her conquests and the loss of her conquests, is now content to nod over the milkpail. Yet Holland, once prodigal of herself in art and effort as Italy, has forged the state and waged its wars and gone on her explorations and colonisations growing sturdier—or is it only richer?—all the time. And so, too, with England. Spain, however, is neither exhausted nor backward, but, like the bull fight, is very much alive. What will Spain become?

For there is a choice to be made: between the sacrifice of culture for the mess of potage of a purely material civilisation; and the preservation of true culture in the advance of a civilisation that will allow men and women really to live. Will Spain go the way of big business? Worship the idol of comfort? Mistake an expensive habit of soft and easy luxury for a good standard of living? Pursue excitement because finer satisfactions cannot be felt by brutalised perception? Sink into vulgar, prosperous democracy?

Those who believe that the methods of Henry Ford or the Standard Oil Company, or of British Chemicals Ltd., are the real, floral triumph of civilisation, that is, those who mistake the means for the end, point out that the great movement of westernisation has now attained a momentum that cannot be overcome, and that westernisation must therefore be accepted. They say that it is vain, useless, futile to object to any of it, and perverse not to admire it.

For our health, bodily comfort, and convenience it has done much, though not nearly so much as people suppose, for it creates its own complications, diseases peculiar to itself, and, while enslaving the whole of life, it enables the unfit to survive. We have no smallpox now—we have cancer and "Spanish" influenza instead. We no longer suffer from famine—we have unemployment instead, which looks better and lasts longer.

We have traffic, telephones, broadcasting, safety razors, tinned food, portable typewriters, electric signs, newspapers, airships, photography, and a host of other things, many of which are forced on us all alike, and so thoroughly that privacy is never free from their invasion. Who is bold enough to ignore the 'phone when it rings at mealtimes? We have let it bluff us, just as we have let the clock bluff us.

Many of these things, if used in the proper way, are good. Many of them are indispensable now. But many others are unnecessary, or are cheap substitutes, plausible makeshifts, that appeal to the laziness in us. I use a safety razor and a portable typewriter. Both are running expenses that will ultimately prove more costly in money and trouble than a real razor and a real typewriter, and they give no sense of adequate satisfaction. But we have so many things to-day, the gifts of westernisation, and we have become so much more rational!

We now go to the doctor instead of the priest, and we believe in psychiatry rather than the church. But oh, how strongly we believe in the doctor and psychiatry, and in having a good time! The last is the promising belief. It seems that even to-day we *must* believe in something. Have we merely exchanged one set of illusions for another?

We must admit that westernisation is making real advances in the application of science, especially in engineering. And we must also admit that for spiritual well-being it has done nothing—nothing but destroy. Instead of spiritual life and satisfaction, it offers excitements and distractions, all of a kind that make somebody else rich. Instead of giving us variety and freedom, which are life, it demands and exacts uniformity and conformity, which are stagnation, however profitable they may be to the disseminated *owners* of business. And we, the poor people, are so dazzled by it all, and it keeps us all so busy, that we have forgotten, or have never learned, that there are things outside it. Not so in Spain, for they still know there.

That Spain will go the way of the democracies is not at all certain. Where did we see a cinema along the three hundred and ninety miles of this road between the Pyrenees and Madrid? Nowhere that I remember. Where, in our subsequent ramblings in Spain, did we see one? Nowhere did cinemas attract our attention. They have them in Spain, of course, but the young men seem to prefer the café. I have no idea what the young women do.

Spain, therefore, may possibly accept only what is best in modern civilisation, and so preserve her culture and retain her sense of values. And in this, the curious, enviable quality of her population may help her. The French peasant is a boor. The Danish peasant is a jolly commoner. But the Spanish peasant is a caballero—a gentleman, who knows the meaning of dignity and the purpose of manners.

Now, was not our old, pat opinion of Spain just a hearsay opinion, not of the Spanish people, but of the Spanish aristocracy? Nations are judged by the men they send abroad, and, though peasants and common people may emigrate, they do not travel. The Spanish noble, when in power, even at so recent a time as the Spanish-American war, was reputed to be haughty, courteous, gracious, cruel, decadent, and vicious—unlike the Spanish peasant as could be. Unlike the ordinary Spaniard. That hearsay opinion of the Spanish noble may have been grossly unjust, but the nobility in Spain, as elsewhere, has now lost power. The day of aristocratic power is nearly done, everywhere. Not only Versailles, but Nymphenbourg, Potsdam, and Schönbrunn are empty palaces now. Is it not aristocracy that is *raza cansada,* unable to hold its position of leadership, in Spain, perhaps, as well as elsewhere?

It will take the ordinary man as long to acquire culture as it took the aristocracies. He will blunder and destroy in his efforts. But if he start with the advantage of being a kind of a gentleman, who knows that he may not eventually take a gentleman's part, that of a leader? That part seems open to a modern Spain, a modern Italy.

And thus we stand, it seems to me, to-day. An old order has decisively fallen. And there is no secure or comfortable place now for the minority of refined intelligence that cannot accept the crude satisfactions that the beginning of a new order offers to decent but ignorant masses of people who are discovering appetites and power. Society is unstable within, far from sure of itself, and the ordinary man has nothing to help him discover the right boundaries of the life that would be best for him. He must flounder, or cease to care a damn, and just go with the drift of things. What do you think of it? But you know that the best of your own countrymen are uneasy. And I? White Australia, and the six-hour day! I, too, am uneasy.

There is great charm and courtesy in the man who is educated. There are spontaneous charm and natural courtesy in many men who are quite uneducated. But there is neither charm nor true courtesy of any kind, nor even safety, in so many men who are less than half-educated. They are the really vulgar persons. (A bas, la bourgeoisie!) And this is the day of the common man, who, however well trained in some occupation or pursuit, is barely half-educated. Educated? I do not mean informed, crammed with information by the schools. I mean, rather, made aware of life, of what it contains, and of what the person may get from it and give to it. A dull and ugly period of history, this may prove to have been, and the world was a much more *comprehensible* place under the old order, prior to 1914.

W. B. Yeats and George Moore have both said bluntly that the arts have failed. *That is the sign.* The people have receded from the level of good art, or the arts have forgotten the people. It may take centuries before the artists and the general public understand each other again.

In Elizabethan times there was, I believe, at least in London, a large public that understood art, and the writing of a play or a poem was then allowed to be a manly thing. It recalls the Athenian public of the time of Pericles. Aristophanes took with the mob. The Japanese public seems to be the only one that resembles it to-day. In Italy, Spain, Germany, Holland, music or painting had as much of their source in the common people as in the cultured classes.

Even the minor Elizabethans, even the Tudor translators, wrote a sturdier, vivider English than is written *anywhere* to-day, and it seems to have been intelligible to ordinary people. Mr. Robert Greene, M.A., was able to sell his little books on the shady life of the times for a groat, and farmers bought them.

The intellectual life of those times resembled, it seems to me, the thirteenth century windows at Bourges. Many things were as near to the peak, the highest possible level, of their development, as they could be, all together: language, flexible and spontaneous, vital and strong; power of expression, full and disciplined; public understanding, quick and deep; thought and action, vividly and well combined in the life of every day. A fullness of real *song* then, one of the rarest and loveliest forms of human expression imaginable.

One cannot guess what led to such an age. How did it happen that at one time nearly everybody in Holland could paint and paint well? Not a condition attainable through government schemes of education, certainly.

But, since western Europe and the Americas both split sharply into a Protestant north and a Catholic south, into northern business and southern reactionary life, we have fallen away from that rich level. In Britain, technique and polish in literature were brought, during the Restoration, to a refinement unknown to the Elizabethans, but the substance gradually became bloodless, and then moved only to artificial stimulus. Later, technique declined, we tired of artifice, became genuine and polished again under Victoria, but accepted the restraint of respectability. And real poetry, now, both in France and England, has taken to somewhat obscure and mystical abodes, as if it had been driven out of common life. There are written, to-day, exquisite things of transcendent beauty that only the rarer spirits can understand. Real poets—real artists, indeed, address a small minority. It is true, for the mass of men, the large public, that the arts have failed, for what art there is is no longer intelligible to them.

We should not strive to hold too strongly to the past, which must inevitably recede and sooner or later be totally forgotten. It is, rather, that our age is achieving little spontaneous beauty of its own. It may console some people to live in the past, but we exist in the present. For a long time, however, throughout the neo-classical period, we have had to turn to the past for what is called inspiration, for deeper satisfactions; have had to copy and imitate, because we cannot create. Loss, that!

There is feverish effort, to-day, to create "something new" in architecture, music, literature, painting, and in the social order and the way of life. And surely, had we anything of our own to express, it should have appeared in architecture, endowed as it is with completely new materials, concrete, steel, glass and numerous composite products. Buildings of great structural merit are indeed erected, and many of them are interesting to contemplate because new principles of planning are being expressed through them, but they disappoint the emotions. No. If we seek creation of our own, it is to be found nowhere but in sculpture, and in instruments, machines, and other works of engineering. In them, the age is discovering a real beauty of its own, a beauty, some of it sinister, admired as yet by few but engineers.

The way of creation, however, is not the way of conscious effort. Creation springs naturally, unconsciously, out of life itself (the boy who may become a painter will draw an artist's line as soon as he discovers pencils), and it is a manifestation of some quality that has only a meagre existence in the life of to-day. Some of us—all of us, to a degree—appreciate, and want, but we cannot *do*. Our popular art commands perfect technique, if it does not use it, and exhibits over-elaboration, violent effect, but we are not expressing much. Possibly we are expressing the spiritual condition of our time better than we know.

There may be little in us, in our time, to express. We do not feel strong movement of the spirit these days, and much that we do feel as individuals (excluding those individuals who fought in the War) has been so perfectly uttered by the past that we weary of its reiterated echo—Hellenic echo, in the England of the last two hundred years.

In the age itself there is no passion of belief. The power of a hierarchy of bankers and manufacturers does not draw us to their delegated tasks with passion. The old God survives only in simple people. For the rest God is no more than idea—something stripped for ever of all personality—and has only the feeblest existence in our daily life. He survives strongly as a principle in deep and serious characters that are not numerous. And not until he fill us again with belief and faith in something, shall the power to create come with force into life. The breaking down of many taboos of respect has liberated our ingenuity, which we mistake for genius. But genius has always been free! Whatever the state of our material prosperity, our physical well-being, our education, or our political strength, our spiritual vigour is low. We are too intellectualised, have plunged too deeply into analysis. Our readiness to analyse is itself proof that we no longer understand our being.

There are many who say that the old forms and values of art are worn out, and that the violent, undisciplined efforts of to-day will produce new and better forms and values. They are to emerge from all the new or hitherto despised things around us, from analytical psychology and factory chimneys, and not from common life and feeling, or from devotion and exaltation, as they used to do. But the development of art is slow, and its abstract values are eternal, rigid as numbers.

Really, the mass of people that seeks to be articulate to-day, a kind of people brought into existence by the economic system, and not the reverse, is ignorant, uncultured, because it has not yet had time to become educated. It is debasing the level and quality of life. This has happened before—and the level has risen again. But in culture the West is at present inferior to the East, and will remain so until it ceases to abuse time for the sake of business and pleasure, that is, until it discovers the need of a soul. The discovery will doubtless come, for most people have an inherent goodness that commands respect. The War made me believe in men. Frenchmen are becoming reasonably sure of themselves and know how to distinguish good from inferior spiritual food. Germans and Americans have a strong will to learn. Australians might recognise Pan, but would not be very curious about him yet.

There is, in fact, in the course of life on earth, a principle of continuity, that moves persistently, but with difficulty, more in a direction of increasing beauty, and of increasing and more effective complexity of organisations, than in the reverse way. I think of the Geological Record. The Cambrian world must have been desolate indeed. The Carboniferous world seems to have been luxuriantly and monotonously green. And not until flowers, insects, and birds appeared in the early Tertiary world, came a beauty at all acceptable to us. And it has moved, since then, through the land mammals to man and creative thought. Surely it must continue to move!

Over this little stretch of very recent years, our arts and our aristocracies have failed, worn out their forces, and the world has fallen into the possession of the common man. (An event, certainly!) But he has a right to the larger part of it, I believe. The arts are unintelligible to him and he affects to despise them—the old arts—but he feels, vaguely, that they are important. They are, most important, less for what they may be than for what they mean.

For when the arts are intelligible the people are at a high level of understanding, of vitality, and life is full. This has little to do with morals, but a great deal to do with feelings and their refinement. The Elizabethan age may have been a sweaty, unsanitary age of riotous fornication, good living, and questionable adventure, but it was not, I believe, inherently a vicious age. It knew every fine flavour of life on the palate, and every fine shade of experience and emotion, and lived richly in its vigour and its understanding.

Where, then, have the vigour and the understanding gone? For art has not disappeared—it is here, but it appeals to very few people. It seems to me that something has affected all three things, vigour, understanding, and art. The increasing safety of life and property, which means the increasing dullness of life, may have caused us to lose vigour, not necessarily of body or of mind, but of character. The subordination of common people to a multiplicity of stupid occupations may have brutalised understanding—for bright youngsters are plentiful, but they grow up to be stodgy men and women. And art has taken the aristocratic road, forsaken the language of the people, wrapped itself in purism, and withdrawn to the highbrow nunnery to protect its thin skin.

But it has refined itself marvellously. When the common man catches it up, fertilises it with his own earthy vitality—comes into possession and understanding of it again—there will be hallelujahs and feastings and spacious times. It is possible that America has already made the muscular beginning. Skyscrapers are not architecture, but there is something to be said for them. And there is much indeed to be said for the novels of Theodore Dreiser. It seems, however, that art must wait, patiently, and without scorn, but with pride, a kind of spiritual virgin, until the larger public climbs to embrace her on her own level. How long to wait? But Rome is patient. And meanwhile, lucky the people, the nation, that confronts the age with a sense of dignity and a belief in refinement. Spain is fortunate.

There! I have wanted, for a long time, to know what I actually think about those questions. Has the diagnosis—a diagnosis should always be pronounced with modesty!—carried you over the seven or eight empty kilometres we had to go after we forgot Alcalá? If so, we may proceed to buy the rest of our lunch in the brown, sprawling village of Torrejón de Ardóz. It must be nearly half-past eleven!

The bakery made only a hard, close bread of a kind that is not eaten if there be anything else to eat. We took it, for there seemed to be nothing else to eat. The wine shop sat in the shade, behind a red and white striped awning, and the man who sold us the wine and lemon beer—the latter for you, backslider again!—was an urbane person to whom one could not possibly offer a tip. Indeed, it did not occur to us to do so. But he knew the impression he made on people, and, in a discreet and aristocratic way, he saved us from the bare likelihood of embarrassment. Instead of giving you the change, a few pence, he kept it, and thanked you with confident understanding. It surprised me that your "No hay de qué" was so prompt and natural. Wine, for those who came in to drink, was served there from big square glass bottles with large glass stoppers; bright, handsome things, and new to us.

While we were buying the wine Torrejón de Ardóz was suddenly filled with a clamour of blaring and battering noises. Long, deep blasts that had a wild and vaguely musical quality, and an accompanying metallic rattle that would have terrified the Congo. We hurried out to see what was the matter, and encountered a band of a dozen young men in shirtsleeves who were marching down the middle of the wide street, some blowing through conches, others drumming and battering on large tin cans. We were inquisitive, and walked beside them for a little way.

"What's all the row about?" we asked.

"Es que un viudo va casarse—It's because there's a widower getting married," they answered, and one of them made that old gesture of the forefingers to illustrate the full meaning of the occasion.

Luckless widower! For these young men were tireless, and would most likely make the night hideous with their serenade. But the conches, remotely Mediterranean, incongruously classical, brought old Triton and his wreathèd horn sharply out of mythological mist.

As we were leaving the village we found another bakery that proclaimed the improvement of elaboración mecanica—mechanical baking—and we crossed the street in hope of buying better bread there, but the machinery turned out the same hard, close little loaves as the other shop. We would have to eat that bread we had bought!

And we sat down to eat it within sight of the town. We could even hear the bellowing of the conches. But the place was a pleasant one enough, and we were able to dangle our legs over the edge of a grassy bank above the road. Behind us, on the left, was the big, handsome church of Torrejón de Ardóz, type of many village churches in Castile, a plain, brown basilica with tiled roof and a fine tower.

Those village churches of the meseta have all compounded into one building in my mind, a large, almost noble block, the walls unbroken by windows, the tiled roof low-pitched, cruciform, surmounted at the intersection by a low, octagonal tower that is capped by a flat pyramid of tiles. A plain, taller tower rises from a corner, and the portal is a simple, classical archway over heavy doors. Of the interior I carry no picture. Why were village churches of so little interest to us in Spain? This one of Torrejón stood in a walled meadow and turned its back to the open country.

A shabby man came out along the road while we were having lunch, and we thought that he was going to beg from us, but he passed on, and we had to forgive ourselves. Our last lunch of the road. Little talk and much silence. The bread, eaten with butter and cheese, was not bad. The milk chocolate, manufactured in Spain, was an unexpected discovery of excellence. Neither of us had ever tasted chocolate as good as this, and we acknowledged its quality with wonder—good milk chocolate, Spain; the two things did not seem to go naturally together; unless ultramarinos be a very old word.

The last lunch of the road. What a precious thing your companionship suddenly came to be, while we lay there on the grass in the vacant noonday! Neither had much to say to the other. An observer might have said that we had forgotten each other's presence, but the companionship was intimately close, highly sensitive, beyond the need of conversation. In four or five hours we would be in Madrid. I had learned to love you, and to-morrow, and for ever from to-morrow, we would be among crowds. We had lived, for more than seven weeks, as neither of us would ever live again, to learn, here, only the wisdom of all common days—that no fine state of life but suffers change or comes to end. And yet, no end that comes but needs our courage. And courage set us on the road again. We smiled in greeting to each other, shouldered the familiar rucksacks with movements learnt of habit, and quietly, quietly, moved into the advancing afternoon.

Trees came over us, trees that lined the road; and meadows, hedges, gathered in around us. Flat road between low pasture-hills. A gentle change. We passed by more than one Castilian, learned boundary stone, and passed between the hills to find a strong and peaceful river, the Jarama.

There was a Latin inscription at the end of the bridge, and the great stone piers were pointed upstream. The river flowed from the north, and lay, like the Henares, close under left-bank, eastern hills—a banded and indented scarp, the summit-line three hundred feet above the water, receding northward, looking far and out across a gentle tilt of western prairie. This place of crossing was the quiet opening of the valley on its eastern side, the land between the rivers, Jarama and Henares.

All those rivers of the journey, far behind us now, excepting this, the last. Henares, Tajuña, Jalón, Ebro, Gállego, Cinca, Segre, Valira, Valira del Orién, Aston, Ariège, Garonne, Tarn, Aveyron, Lemboulas, Lot, Ouysse, Dordogne, Corrèze, Vézère, Vienne, Taurion, Creuse, Petite Creuse, Indre, Cher, Yèvre, Barangeon, Sauldre and Beuvron, Loiret, Loire, Juine, and Bièvre—great names and little names that gleam and sparkle in review. How we had known them all!

And how these rivers of our road across two different lands revealed us their distinct and separate souls! With them we lived as in that ancient world that peopled the forests and the streams each with its own particular god. And here, the last, Jarama. For Parisian Seine, and Manzanares, that unheard-of little stream that flows beside Madrid, were not the beginning and the end. They lay outside our journey.

Downstream the river disappeared around a bend, and in a hedged meadow on the eastern bank magnificent black bulls were browsing placidly. Jarama—bulls! What was the boast of Don Quixote when he was commanding all chance travellers of the road to do homage to the beauty of the fair huntress, three centuries and a half ago, in Aragon? ". . . *para mi no hay toros que valgan, aunque sean de los más bravos que cría Jarama en sus riberas!*—I count no bulls of worth, unless it be those bravest that are reared on the banks of Jarama!" And here, to-day, were those very banks of Jarama, and yonder, the brave, black bulls, the same, and worthy of the good knight's praises still! Who, then, shall say the world is not for ever young?

But the young world can be surly. Across the river there were several houses by the road, and one of them a café. A stupid boy within would not say yes or no to our request for coffee, nor would he call the patrón. Out of patience with the boy, we left the place, marched quickly from Jarama, westward to the hills, the barest and most vacant steppes and hills of grass in all Castile.

Out there, you asked me what was in my mind on days when we used to walk for hours without a word. My answer was almost a confession, for in those last days of traversing Castile I had felt strange power in the land, and had attained a liberation of the mind. Serenity and peace, unhaunted by those symbols of the past, those visitations of the road that came to me before. Thought there was, but this was, rather, calm existence of the spirit, so clear, so hyaline that life within me moved as it had never moved before. I was doing what I had never done, had never thought it possible for me to do, and since have never done.

I was composing music! By which I mean that music was composing itself in me, without effort, and without thought. It existed in me, clear, consecutive, and orchestrated. I could hear it, and a power that is not mine allowed me to hear full chords and a complexity of structure which in my proper life I cannot hear. Ever since I can remember, I have made up tunes and whistled them—most people do—but in my ordinary states of mind I have no power to imagine more than one note at a time. My mental ear is incapable of communicating to me the sound of even the simplest chord. But here, in Castile, in these last days, ambitious fugues and orchestrated themes swept through me, gave me the experience of a kind of life that is not mine, musician's life, existence in the colour of all tones.

It was like living on a nourishment of light and clarity, in time, but not in space. My body was in vigorous health, and my mind, perhaps for the first time in years, was free from any kind of strain. No resistance held one part from any other part—I was coherent, pellucid, whole, mysteriously whole—though not complete.

But, in experimental effort to transfer the music from its absolute existence on to an imaginary, written score, to record it in my mind, I failed. I could not grip, could not arrest, one bar, to hold it in my memory one second. It would start itself, and flow. I could stop, suspend, or end it, but never hold. I understood, perhaps, how music exists in musicians, but not at all how they mould it, and project it out into the world.

And in Castile I thought, yes, often thought, about the sea. I could not help it. In France one does not think about the sea—one thinks of the soil. But here, in Spain, the soil is meagre and the land is bare. And thought goes far beyond these naked billows of the land, beyond the steady, far horizons, down to the coasts of Spain. To ships. And in much that I have written here of Spain you will detect allusion to the sea and ships. Not so in France. For Spain, even to this high heart of Spain, is a maritime country, accessible by land only through France. And the sea is as much my native element as the land.

You gave no similar confidence to my counter-question about your inner life, but were evasive. As for me, naturally, I was not existing all the time as music, nor thinking always of the sea. There was much deliberate thought, of a kind already recorded in this chapter, review of our journey, contrast and comparison of France, a not-forgotten France, and Spain.

Had we been unfair to France, in taking so much greater joy of Spain? You said once, or wrote me, that Spain was the "fragile" part of our journey. It was the part wherein we felt an elusive delicacy of influence, a subtle variety of experience, that made it what it is for us—a beloved country. And the fugitive nature of its charm, its unobtrusive, deep beauty, most difficult to express, and which does not call aloud to the traveller "Behold how fair I am!" makes it a country which it would be too easy *not* to appreciate; a country where one's understanding too easily might fail.

And you said once, that, if we seemed to find more beauty in Spain than in France, the cause—the beauty—may have been in ourselves. I believe that we made stronger response in Spain, and if that were so the beauty must have been there, because responses are evoked, are given, to reality that calls for them. One must admit, however, to being more responsive, more sensitive, under some conditions than under others.

But Spain gave no such ecstasy as that first vision of the Pyrenees. Often, Spain had called poetry to mind; but France, at this one place, had had power enough to call a sort of poetry into being.

And France gave us nothing so bleak, so melancholy, as this undulating, grassy steppe we had to cross this afternoon; this vacuum around Madrid, into which a gusty wind so cold was beginning to flow that we had to don our overcoats. Grit swept along the road, and when we halted at three o'clock we were glad to move again into the wind, glad to keep moving to keep warm. And this was early Summer—no French season, but high, Mongolian Spain!

We have little right to judge two foreign countries while our own so stand in need of judgment. But we have full freedom to prefer. Let me assess the value of the grounds for our preference. You came fresh and unprejudiced to both France and Spain, but my experience of them is disproportionate. I am of French extraction, have spent time amounting to years in France, but no longer time than you in Spain. But Spain was the long-cherished goal of my imagination. What better background could there be for prejudice? Or is my long eagerness for Spain balanced by my long experience of France? I think not.

Preferring Spain, we both know more, much more, of France. We do not know the weaknesses of Spain. There are twice as many millions of people in France as there are in Spain, and on this journey we were longer time in France than Spain by ten days, and through France we passed a distance longer than through Spain by one hundred and thirty miles. The ratio of our experience of France to that of Spain during the journey, derived from numbers of people, time, and distance, is five to one! Add my previous knowledge of France and it becomes, for me, overwhelmingly greater. Add, however, our subsequent experience of, and interest in, Spain.

But we must remember that France is a homogeneous unit, and that our traverse was therefore a representative cross-section of the country; while Spain is a group of different units, and our traverse was by no means a representative cross-section of them all. Andalusia, Estremadura, Viscaya—what are they like? Possibly they resemble nothing that we saw.

We must remember, too, the deliberate, cultivated innocence in which we set forth to journey through the land. We knew, had inevitably learnt much, about France, but our ignorance of Spain was boundless. In order to receive our own, fresh impression of the country, we were studiously, snobbishly careful not to learn anything about it before we went there. For information about the ground we were to traverse, both in France and Spain, we consulted no authority but the map! Borrow, Ford, Washington Irving, Théophile Gauthier, Bogue-Luffman, even Bædeker, we avoided them all! Indeed, we have continued to avoid them, or at least I have. For, concerning Spain I have read little, and most of that little has been by Spanish authors. We wanted *a Spain of our own*, and here in this book is mine. May it prove also to be yours.

There were things we lost in France and Spain, through that proud ignorance of ours: certain architecture in Toulouse that had an important influence on the French Renaissance; Goya's pictures and frescoes in Zaragoza; perhaps many other things. But the freshness of our impression was surely worth such losses!

We assumed, too, that the impression was a just and correct one, but it may not have been so. Strongly we felt the contrast between these two great countries, and much of that contrast may be real, enduring. But neither country, when we saw them, was leading its natural life, because each was then facing a crisis.

France, where the War was; France, the country to sustain the heaviest shock of war that has ever been sustained, was under a stress that interrupted her recovery, in the Spring of 1926. Her money was rapidly falling in value on the foreign market, and, while we were strolling south from Paris, nobody knew what the franc might be worth to-morrow. Its value was changing daily, hourly, and over the period of our journey it fluctuated between one hundred and thirty and one hundred and forty to the pound sterling. The French were nervous, anxious, frightened lest the franc repeat the calamitous history of the German mark. The whole country was irritated by the presence of foreigners, and a few ignorant people were almost hostile to us. In 1926, therefore, we found the French temper short, principally on account of the rate of exchange, and our dealings with many people were unpleasant. Our impression was accordingly bad.

It was thought that we were in France in order to exploit the low rates of exchange. Everybody believed that our foreign money gave us a great advantage over them, and nobody understood that it gave us no advantage at all—we had always to pay the equivalent of a pound for anything worth a pound, because prices were promptly adjusted to the rate of exchange.

But the foreigner has a monetary advantage in France, one that exists in normal times, and which persisted during this period of financial instability. The general cost of living has long been lower there than in other western countries. The ordinary Frenchman is unaware that it costs him less to live than it costs other westerners, and he refuses to believe it when told so. It is likely that he has less money on which to live than some other westerners, but that is a different problem. There is no ready, simple word for "cheap" in French, possibly because a Frenchman will not pay more for a thing than it is worth, and household supplies are cheap. He does not think about cheapness in quite the same way as others. And this is a real advantage that France offers to people like us, one that is not related directly to the rate of exchange, if at all.

Spain, barely touched even by the shadow of the War, was nevertheless affected by it, like every country in the world. Some gained, others lost. Spain had both gains and losses. The peseta, in 1926, was worth about six-sevenths of its par value, but to the people it still seemed to represent a whole peseta, and we heard no talk of rates of exchange. It was certainly the more expensive country, and it cost us each about 1s. 1½d. (27 cents) a day more to live there, during the journey, than it did in France.

For several years Spain had had no representative government, and, for all we heard or saw, it was quite happy without one. There was no disorganisation. People did not talk to us about the government, and they behaved as if it were of no great interest or importance to them. But the whole country was mobilised, actually at war. Strange, strange indeed, that Spain gave me no deeper impression of military activity than the France and Italy of the time! Occasionally, nevertheless, we had a keen sense of the hidden anxiety of people—at Séo de Urgél, at Osera de Ebro, at Torija. There was a war in Morocco, and women in Spain were waiting for news. The feelings of Spain do not show on the surface.

Did we see a natural Spain? Did we meet the people of France as they are in times of prosperity? To the latter we can say no. To the former we can give no answer. But, in spite of all these reasons for caution, we both prefer Spain with a strong preference. Why? Because, after making all allowances, we found in Spain much more of the beauty we sought than in France, and we found the Spaniard a pleasanter fellow to meet than the Frenchman. The differences were so pronounced, and many of them that we found forcible must surely be deep and lasting, no mere consequence of a temporary condition of either country.

France, I believe, gave herself the name of *la belle France*, and for long it has been assumed in other lands that France is a country of greater than ordinary beauty, and that the French are the politest and most cultured people of Europe. This is not all true.

England is a more beautiful country than France (proclaim it, oh England!), and politeness in common dealings, if it ever really existed in France, died with the Revolution—or with industrialism. Ordinary people in certain democratic countries are quite aggressively as good as everybody else they meet, and common politeness between strangers, real politeness, and not the mere form of it, is one of the first things to decline under democracy. Most Frenchmen are ordinary.

French culture, however, is a fine and superior thing, perhaps the most mature and highly developed of the West, and it enables individuals to lead a most satisfying life. It is the tradition, really, of the old aristocracy, maintained, but not created by the kind of France that exists to-day. But it is real, and is the cause of our admiration, the reason why we go to France. The Revolution was not allowed to break the tradition of culture, but was used as the means of bestowing that tradition upon the whole people. They are accepting it in increasing numbers, and it should, in time, make mellow the assertive exterior of their liberty.

Urban intelligence in France is extraordinarily high; and rural obfuscation in France is almost impenetrable. Few people there have many illusions, and the educated are sceptical while the uneducated are suspicious. But they contradict themselves in a way that reminds me of the shrewdness and gullibility which are obverse and reverse faces of the same America. For nearly everywhere in France we were judged by the appearance of our clothes, not by our faces and manners. Had I, in many of those difficulties with inns and restaurants, indulged in persuasive insincerities or alluded to my war service, the people would have relented and become themselves more quickly. Why, then, did I not do so?

Because we were looking for people who are brave enough to be themselves in life, and intelligent enough to recognise the quality of others. We found them in France—M. Rombergues and Tombell, the boy at Montauban, the girl who ferried us across the Dordogne, the little girl who told us how to find Frédéric the ferryman, the girl at les Quatre-Chemins, the people at Eymoutiers, Madame Amélie Martin, the young M. Fontenoy, the officer at Bourges, the priest at St. Lyé, and the women at Bas-de-Torfou; delightful people of all kinds, educated and simple, old and young, and it has been joy to celebrate them all. The list is rather liberal on my part, and I feel that I am not unjust in saying how rare such people were in France. It is interesting, too, to notice that we met more of them in the region of the Massif Central than elsewhere!

Often, however, we were able to observe the French, to watch them being natural, sometimes because we shocked them out of their reserve, as with the gendarmes at Tarascon-sur-Ariège, but generally on occasions when they were not regarding us, as on the promenade at Foix, at the dance at Guéret, and in the cathedral at Orléans. And how like other people they were when we saw them thus! But when we approached them directly, many of them assumed that hard, heartless reserve which makes it almost impossible for a stranger to know individuals or to be admitted to their homes. So effective is their defence that the French people whom I know best are still the ones I know in Sydney.

They seem to care little in France for the feelings of strangers, and they know little about strangers or about foreign countries. They are informed about the world, by journals and reviews that are amongst the best in the world, but they are informed intellectually, and not by experience. They do not know the world, outside their own part of it, and their understanding goes astray at times. They are so satisfied with their own country and their own way of life that few of them travel abroad. I have had the guttersnipe of a French newsboy tell me with insolent assurance that France is *le meilleur pays*—the best of all countries. "What do they know of England who only England know?" I thought. But we foreigners, Americans, British, Scandinavians, travel in numbers, and we go, among other places, to France. We know the French better than they know us, because we see them in their own country.

The war, indeed, exhibited France to millions of men—Germans, Britishers of all kinds, Americans, Portuguese, Asiatics—many of whom bore away an unfavourable impression. In spite of the intellectual honesty of the French, their hard and sensible practicality; their freedom from many kinds of illusions about themselves, their courage and tenacity under the severest test to which a nation has ever been submitted, and in spite of their culture, many of us who were at the War remember a France of "*Bouvard et Pécuchet.*" And you and I, on the road down to Spain, met the France of "*Bouvard et Pécuchet*" more often than we met that belle France which really exists, if only for Frenchmen.

It is time, now, to tell France that we no longer blindly admire. We know, and, as far as we may, we understand. We admire critically, now, and we endeavour to be fair. If the modern nations of a world of common men are to live in *friendly* peace, they must give themselves as much to the general as to the personal task of living. France, on account of her geographical position, can effect the stability of every country in western Europe. Ordinary Frenchmen, therefore, must be taught to be less self-satisfied, and to consider and to understand foreigners, about whom they know and care less at present than do foreigners about them. An impossible conversion! Yet, the sovereignty of nations, even now, is no longer absolute. It is becoming a trust.

But I go back to France. Life there is so satisfying. And, if the French take little notice of us when we are among them, they allow us to use their country with the utmost freedom. I am drawn, too, by mystical, melancholy necessity to try to understand what passed out of the world, in France, when the old world destroyed itself there.

In Spain we found at once that the Spaniards are natural in their behaviour—they don't pose to one, but present, from the beginning, their real selves. We understood quickly that they said what they meant, and we seldom had to argue and convince in Spain, as we were so often forced to do in France. Nor did they ever judge us by the appearance of our clothes. The Spaniards are realists, and they looked past our clothes to the important thing, ourselves.

We "knew where we were," as they say, in Spain. The suspicion which makes the French peasant an inquisitive person to whom one naturally tells lies was represented in Spain by a milder but genuine interest. The Spanish people courteously accepted us, warmly, in many places, and when they asked questions it was in a way that made us eager to answer, for they wanted to understand foreigners, and wanted to know what foreigners thought of Spain.

We found the intelligence of country people in Spain higher than we expected, and, although we met no one there as interesting as the finest people we met in France, as interesting, for example, as the girl at les Quatre-Chemins or as Madame Amélie Martin, the average intelligence along the road was higher in Spain than in France. Pilar is the outstanding character of the Spanish part of the journey, but behind her, in my memory, is a battalion of sincere Spanish acquaintances. They may have forgotten us quickly, but they gave us their interesting selves when we met them. Probably it is because they do not live in scattered farmhouses or in tiny villages, but in what are really little towns, that the rural people of Spain are less narrow, more trustful, and of readier wit than the peasant people in France. Wit? France may be a land of wit, but Spain is a serious land of joy—and song.

We may be told that our opinions are not sound, because we met, mainly, country people. Intellectual, refined, and wealthy people are not easily to be met by shabby vagabonds who pass on to further places day by day. I would assert, however, that we met the people who *are* France, *are* Spain, the ordinary people who exist in millions.

The most highly cultured men and women of most countries, those who are the vehicle of the loftier interests, have an existence that rises above nationality, and they are not remarkably dissimilar. There are more of them in some countries than in others, and, though they may belong in many ways to the countries which produce them, they are not representatives of nationality. Put M. Claudel and Mr. George Santayana together on a lonely island and they would associate as two lofty intelligences. Put a London and a Paris policeman on such an island, and they would associate as an Englishman and a Frenchman. The national type specimen, as in lower biology, is the healthy, ordinary individual. We met France, and met Spain. We prefer Spain.

We were sure of that, long before we came to the end of our journey, and in spite of many things we did not like in Spain. Here, in this lonely place, in the gusty desolation of this last day's end, we held it still for knowledge more certain than belief in near Madrid's existence. Could uninhabited miles of empty hills disclose a city, and could it be near? It must be near. We knew it eagerly, yet still, right to the end, we felt that it was far away.

For half an hour we had been trying to see over the skyline, expectant every moment that Madrid would begin to appear, would thrust its loftiest chimneys and its tallest towers a little higher than the intervening hills. But no. The land lay bare, the line of sky remained unbroken, and no traffic passed us on the road until we met a long procession of mule carts. They, at least, might possibly be coming from Madrid itself.

Most of the carts were covered, and they were all empty of merchandise. Their owners were lying back on the folded sacks fast asleep, their legs dangling over the front rails. The mules, a file of three to each cart, and the dogs, one tethered to the axle of each cart, were trudging patiently homeward, their heads down, their thoughts far away, every beast as abstracted and solitary as a mind in the personal silence of routine. Each team and its cart a mechanical system that moved with a jerky, monotonous rhythm of languid strain sustained; creak and clatter and sway and swing; leather and hoof and wood and sinew; dust and stones and the miles of road; nothing to do but go and go.

It was while you were trying to photograph the insensible occupant of one cart that a disturbance broke out at the head of the column. Angry shouts, the crack of a whip, the jolting, wrecking confusion of a mechanical system that has got out of gear. One team, walking asleep most likely, had strayed from the road out on the bumpy fields, and the jolting had woken the driver up.

He had leapt from the cart, whip in hand, not to lead the team quietly back to the road, but to vent a savage spite at the stupidity of the animals. He lashed them and swore at them without restraint or reason, and seemed actually to be driving the sinewy energy of his wrath to its utmost capacity to inflict pain. Meanwhile, the rest of the procession clattered quietly along the road. It was no concern of theirs—did not even interest them. Was it any concern of ours—to court abuse, perhaps blows, in a failure to make ourselves understood? His leading mule was trying hard, pulling desperately, but it didn't know what it was supposed to do and was given no help. The man was too infuriated to do anything sensible. But he was tiring quickly.

We turned our backs on the scene and left him to find his own stupid, hindmost way after the column, with beasts the slower for his maltreatment.

Dusty and gusty this white, heaving way of grassy desolation. For a few minutes a tall factory chimney—blur of delicate precision suspended on the plane of a remote beyond—deceived us. But Madrid gave no sign. The near wave hid the further world, and up the wave we climbed, up the naked, undulating flank, roundly over its lesser billows and easily between them, rising, rising up the gentler slope of the broad, high spur that thrusts between the rivers Jarama and Manzanares, the spur that hides Madrid from travellers who approach it from the east.

We came to a clump of Lombardy poplars, and because they were the first trees of the later miles of afternoon, and because it was the last afternoon, we took snapshots of each other, standing in the cold south-west wind, the trees tossing behind us, our clothes pressed to our forms and flapping rearward in the wind.

Then on, and over a hill whence the country spread before us not quite bare. A turreted mansion rose among the trees of an estate away to the right. La Alameda de Osuna, said the map—the Osuna poplar grove. A village hidden there, perhaps; but what had this estate to do with Osuna, the old Andalusian university town of which Cervantes tells a tale? We had noticed places named as "of" other places before—Torremocha *de Jadraque* and Viana *de Jadraque*, the parent place, Jadraque, far from both, and other villages between. You made the good guess that such names may come down from feudal times; that la Alameda, here, may once have been a fief of the lords of distant Osuna.

A twist of the road brought us unexpectedly to Canillejas and the terminus of a tramline. I saw it first, and greeted it with excitement.

"Look! The tram! This must be the outermost limit of Madrid!" But nine kilometres lie between Canillejas and Madrid, and Canillejas is no more than a spoilt country village, a straggly place without cafés, almost without shops, and we passed right through it to the other side, where the country was empty as before.

Nothing but the road had changed. It looked like a street that had crawled out into the country and got lost. It was no longer the great highway, the Camino de Madrid en Francia, but had turned into the Calle de Alcalá—the Street of Alcalá.

And what had become of the telegraph line? Appropriately, it had left us at Canillejas, where the road bent to the west-south-west and became a street. The line continued its westerly course to a terminus of wires on the north-eastern edge of the city where we found its end, a few days later, in a raw grove of poles that had grown up on a vacant plot of land near the University.

Canillejas—nineteen hundred and forty feet above the sea, and little more than five miles from Madrid; and here, beyond it, we were still going gently uphill. Madrid was still concealed. Ten minutes to four. We sat down to rest under an untidy tree that grew on a bank of hardened clay by the road.

And it still seemed, even here, at the last place where we sat for ten minutes by the roadside, that this progression of walking,

walking, walking, could not end, certainly would not end to-day. It was a manner of living, now. It was more.

It had become our life, as if we existed in a world where people do nothing but walk and walk the delightful way of an endless companionship, towards a Madrid that remains for ever out of sight, further on, never to be reached by mortal feet, yet ever to draw them on, on, remoter miles from here, for the sake of a faith that is content but to aspire.

Madrid! What was Madrid to us, even at this last halt, but a name? A prostitute had told us that it would be muy simpático. It was the capital of Spain. It was over the hill. What more did we know of it? We were convinced that it really lay over the hill, for a passing tram was bound for the Puerto del Sol, and that, we knew, was in Madrid. But we—where were we?

For this place where we were sitting was familiar to me as if it were on the western outskirts of Sydney. The hard, baked clay was so hard that it had cracked of its dryness and the traces of the cracks were worn. There were smooth pellets of loose gravel on the surface, that pitted the hand, the elbow. The dryish, brittle grass, toughly rooted, with bare earth showing through, could leave a pattern on hard-pressing flesh. Long ants crawled over the edge of their funnelled nest at base of the tree—a resinous tree with dry, fibrous bark. Detail of locality so known, so natural to buried years within me, that I pointed to the gum trees—eucalyptus trees—across the road as if we were in my own country. "*Those* are gum trees," I said, as if you had been expecting me to show you a gum tree at any minute. I didn't even call them "Australian" gum trees.

They were growing behind the wall of an estate, and were not good examples. They were too young and were developing the same lank slenderness that overtakes the blue gums in California. But you admired them spontaneously, said that they had "a light, open grace," and I was reassured. I didn't want you to disappoint me about gum trees, nor did I want you to think that all gum trees were like these.

And so, as we left our last place of regular halt, I began to talk like an advertising agent about other kinds of gum trees, and talked until we got to the top of the spur.

And still there was no sign of an outspread Madrid! The top was broad and flattish, and there were scattered buildings along the road and ahead. Untidy country—nothing more. But the wind had dropped and the afternoon sun was pleasantly warm. The place where the horse and cart were hitched to the pump at the kerb, proved to be a café. We went in, and found it small, crowded, and not of the rural kind.

A formal counter with a device for washing glasses, and a fat boy who failed to wash them clean. Square glass bottles for the wines, as at Torrejón de Ardóz. And tiles everywhere, gaudy ones, the product, most likely, of one of those companies "for the manufacture of furnishings for cafés" that lead such a flourishing existence in France. The floor was tiled; tiles ran high up the walls to an encircling shelf on which were ranged scores of bottles of the same kind of ginger beer. Even the table tops were tiled. At one table sat a group of shabby, hairy men conversing vigorously with the patrona, their theatrically fierce appearance underlined by a sharp sickle that lay on the table.

We ordered coffee and were served by the boy, whose shape and manner led you to remark that destiny unkindly shapes the ends of many people early in their lives. "For look!" you said, "He has a fat bum and the air of a barman already!" But shouts outside drew everybody's attention to the door. The horse, tired of waiting out there at the pump, had incontinently lain down in his harness on the roadway. With an impatient but not astonished "Caramba!" the owner of the sickle went out to adjust the irregularity.

By the time we followed him out the irregularity had been adjusted. We continued our way to Madrid, and came, instead, to Ciudad Lineal—"String Town," I would call it. Ciudad Lineal was a broad avenue of continuous properties and houses on both sides, that ran in a gentle curve, according to the map, from the Calle de Alcalá to join another main road five kilometres away to the northwest. Its line lay just under the lee of the ridge, on the downward side towards Madrid. An altogether exceptional cross-country avenue, part of a ring that may some day encircle Madrid far out beyond the edges of the city. We heard later that Ciudad Lineal was an experiment in town-planning. I have a book that was printed there, and I surmise that the clean air has drawn printers to the place, from Madrid, just as many French printers have chosen to set up in Etampes, Abbeville, Dijon, etc., rather than in Paris.

As soon as we got past Ciudad Lineal we saw Madrid most unimpressively before us, as if we had broken through its outer ring. We were too close to see it whole, and it sloped down and away from us, the lower, distant quarters hidden by the near and higher ones.

Madrid! The city spread so steeply on the open, hilly flank of Manzanares' valley that its north-eastern edge lies higher by six hundred feet than the opposite margin on the river bank four miles across the town! Only the hills of that long, downward slope, to which the city clings, prevent Madrid from sliding into Manzanares, to be swept away by the next flood and borne into Tagus, epic débris that would grind and roll and jam and burst around Toledo itself, that stable situation for the capital of Spain.

Madrid! And all we could see from here were the straggly outskirts of a city that has no natural environs. For Madrid, like Washington D.C., has not grown up out of the country but is eating, corroding its way into the country. And that country of Madrid spreads out in mountainous, gentle miles of noble desolation, empty, bare, and silent—magnificent, in its negation, as the Roman Campagna in the time of its decay. How faithful to her proportions of intensity, that Spain should set her modern capital here!

We were still able to look down across this open, grassy country, leftward, southward, past the city's flank. Far out on a hillside stood an exotic building, half Hindoo, half Byzantine, a tall copper dome on a small base of red brick, new, ugly, and so like the mortuary chapel of Guadalajára in all its relations that we gazed upon it like persons discovering again the same sign in the heavens. Of what? Of modernity, a new age.

Then we entered the faubourg, passed across the margin of the city itself, and the red brick buildings mustered slowly about us. Houses of poor people, shops, cafés, but none of them old. This was a young quarter on the growing-edge, the vigorously growing edge, two and a half miles from the centre of Madrid; but already, here, we were in the city.

There were catchpenny slot machines by the kerb in places, one of them offering their money back, to persons who could throw counters into the gaping mouth of a large, brass frog. Clang of a tram bell. Rattle of vehicles. Untidy children on doorsteps. Women carrying pails of water. The city's edge. The continuous frontage to the street interrupted here and there by a still vacant, not-long-to-be-vacant, block of ground.

As we glanced through between two buildings on the right we saw the open green of wide, unoccupied land outside the narrow faubourg, and, close behind the houses, a grassy knoll. With one accord we turned, went through the vacant block, and ran to the top of the knoll.

A black nanny-goat was tethered there, and a gay little kid was frisking around her, kicking and springing for the sheer joy of being alive and young and healthy. God put him there as a vessel to hold and express our own far-springing joy, our own great, bounding stillness, the triumphant clamour of our silence, as we gazed, together, at our destination.

Madrid, the mass of a splendid city mantling the ground, so near, rising over there to the west, in front of us! All we could say was "How new! How American! How quickly it must be growing!" The sight revealed no beauty of Madrid. Blocks of big apartment houses, advancing uphill in the extensions of a prosperous, wealthy suburb. But we saw not that.

We saw a goal attained, and saw, too, the swift vision of its attainment. Weeks, weeks, of traversing the land; weeks passed in the eternal freshness of the world; weeks of a fine purity of association; weeks of a life that we could never live again. For yonder lay Madrid.

There was not any doubt that it was over. We had set out to walk from Paris to Madrid, had carried out our plan almost exactly, and neither Paris nor Madrid had ever held, for us, a greater meaning than the ends, the limits of our journey's thousand miles. A new, a different adventure opened now, discovery of the city, the city seen, attained, not yet revealed, but soon and slowly to be known. There would be travelling in Spain, as others go who pay their railway fares; but Spain, for us, extended now behind us, found and known along four hundred miles of road. Two dreamers, we had done that which the sensible, practical people, held by the necessary pattern of routine, would never do.

And it was over.

We had learnt what it means to walk and walk all day and every day, through foreign lands. We had felt the rhythm of the earth, short, brisk, in France; so long and grand in Spain. In the rhythm of our days, their warmth or coldness, their changing skies of sun and rain, the rise and fall of our own moods and memories and understanding, we had learnt companionship; learnt how to bear the affection of the same person all day, day after day, to find it, here at the end, far stronger than the test. We had found the diversity of life, emerging from the rise and fall, the poverty and abundance, of the surface of the earth. We had sought and found all forms of beauty, from simplicity to grandeur. We had learnt to meet ugliness. We had come very close to the life of men and things, and had accepted, or tried to accept it, all, finding in all an overpowering interest. We had learnt to understand a little of the life of peoples and the uneven chances of men; to meet hospitality and indifference, finding more of goodness than of badness; finding a dumb nobility in those who maintain most surely this life of ours on earth—the people who do not dwell in cities. And we had learnt to understand something of our own place; to feel more, far more, of the fullness of our own being than can be felt in the daily life wherein we both belong.

It was nearly all tranquil. A little effort; a great effort. Yet it was tranquil. But it was adventure, taken deliberately from the offerings of life, and it was superb.

Here it ended. For yonder lay Madrid, and inmost Spain.

And far beyond Madrid, under the western confines of the sky, the milk-white crests of grey Guadarrama shed the quiet radiance of glory down upon it all. Olympian whiteness of the lasting snows! Peace, and thanksgiving, and such sacrifice as later life demand. Is there a temple on the grassy knoll, an altar to pedestrian deities? A she-goat and a frisking kid, and far, Olympian snows—

Pagan!

Pagan hearts alone can feel the world's whole, glorious anguish.

Geneva, Beauvais, London.
1927-29.

Brockhaus –